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SAINT AUGUSTINE

THE CITY OF GOD

BOOKS I-VII

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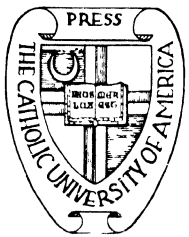

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WRITINGS OF SAINT AUGUSTINE

VOLUME 6

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FOREWORD

by

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FOREWORD

THE CITY OF GOD (*De civitate Dei*) is not only one of St. Augustine's masterpieces, but ranks, along with the *Confessions*, among the classics of all literature. It is hardly possible to analyze the contents of this vast work, which, in spite of its overall plan, is marked by so many digressions. The purpose of this Introduction is to focus the reader's attention on Augustine's main theme, and to emphasize its historical importance. In his notion of a universal religious society is to be sought the origin of that ideal of a world society which is haunting the minds of so many today.

Augustine, it is true, did not pose exactly the same problem; that is why we should not read the *City of God* in the hope of finding therein the solution. Nevertheless, the problem posed and resolved by Augustine is certainly the origin of ours, and, if we are failing to resolve our problem, it is probably because we are forgetting that its solution presupposes a solution of the problem resolved by Augustine.

Our contemporaries aspire after a complete unity of all peoples: one world. They are quite right. The universal society which they are endeavoring to organize aims at being a political and temporal society. In this regard they are again right. Perhaps their most serious mistake is in imagining that a universal and purely natural society of men is possible without a universal religious society, which would unite men in the acceptance of the same supernatural truth and in the love of the same supernatural good.

I

The Problem of a Universal Society

Christianity was born in the Roman Empire, which itself was merely a vast extension of the City of Rome, or, if the formula seems imprudent, which owed to Rome its laws, its order and whatever unity it possessed. But, first of all, what was Rome? Many and divers explanations of its origin have been proposed; and, since the specialists themselves have not as yet found a solution of the problem acceptable to everyone, it would be imprudent to make a choice for them, and still more imprudent to build upon any one of their hypotheses.[1] No one, however, doubts that Rome, as Athens, was one of the ancient cities, each of which was either a state or the center of a state. We are safe in admitting that these cities were, first of all, peopled by men united by the bond of common blood.[2] At the time of Pericles, 451 B.C., it was still the law that only the children of a legitimately married Athenian father and mother could be citizens of Athens. The division of the Greek cities into phratries and associations, a division found again in the *familia* and Roman *gens,* soundly confirms this hypothesis.

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1 A. Piganiol, *Essai sur les origines de Rome.* (Paris 1917).

2 Wilamowitz-Moellendorf, 'Staat und Gesellschaft der Griechen,' in *Die Kultur der Gegenwart,* II, 42-51, IV, 97, 100. Cf., also, Ernest Barker, *Greek Political Theory. Plato and his Predecessors* (London 1917), a complete revision of the same author's *Political Thought of Plato and Aristotle,* published in 1906. Note the interesting remark in the Preface (p. viii) to the effect that the *Laws* are the most modern (or mediaeval) of all the writings of Plato.

However, it in no way rules out the penetrating views formerly developed by Fustel de Coulanges in his classic work, *The Ancient City*. Therein, the family was described as already bound to religious beliefs and sacred rites, from which it was inseparable. In direct opposition to historical materialism, de Coulanges professed what might not too incorrectly be called an 'historical spiritualism.' By this is meant simply that, if man is no longer governed in our day as he was twenty-five centuries ago, it is because he no longer thinks as he thought then.[3] Thence comes the basic thesis that 'history does not study material facts and institutions alone; its true object of study is the human mind; it should aspire to know what this mind has believed, thought and felt in the different ages of the life of the human race.'[4]

From such a viewpoint, it is religion which dominates from on high the family and the ancient city. Founded on the religious worship of the hearth, that is, of the household fire, which was not simply metaphorical but real, each family constituted first and foremost a closed society, which its own worship separated from all other families. 'Religion did not say to a man, showing him another man: That is your brother. It said to him: That is a stranger; he cannot participate in the religious acts of your hearth; he cannot approach your family's tomb; he has other gods than yours, and cannot unite with you in a common prayer; your gods reject his adoration, and regard him as their enemy; he is

3 Fustel de Coulanges, *La Cité Antique* (Paris 1924) 2-3. All quotations to this work are taken from the translation by Willard Small (Boston 1894). Haunted by the harm done to France in the attempt to imitate the ancient democracies during the revolution of 1789, Fustel de Coulanges wanted to prove above all else that they are inimitable.

4 *Ibid.* 11, 9, 103-104; Small, p. 123.

your foe, also.'[5] In order to constitute larger social groups it was necessary, first of all, to overcome the separation of families.

Let us suppose that families were grouped into *gentes* or associations, *gentes* into tribes, and tribes into cities. There, also we shall meet with worship: that of another group of divinities, such as Zeus or Heracles, whose origin is uncertain, but whom we know to have been placed above the worship of the household gods, without, however, eliminating this latter worship. The recognition of gods common to several families alone made possible the birth of the city. 'Society developed only so fast as religion enlarged its sphere. We cannot, indeed, say that religious progress brought social progress; but, what is certain is that they were both produced at the same time and in remarkable accord.'[6]

That is why the ancient city, even after its expansion into an empire, could not change its character. It is possible to conceive of such an empire in two different ways: as a philosopher might and as a politician. Philosophically speaking, the idea is not new that the universe is one and that, in a certain sense, it constitutes a single city. When we speak

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5 That is doubtless why love played a secondary role in the ancient family. 'The members of the ancient family were united by something more powerful than birth, affection or physical strength; this was the religion of the sacred fire, and of dead ancestors,' (*ibid.* II, 1.40; Small, p. 51). To guarantee a continuous worship of the dead, marriage was necessary, since children were necessary to perpetuate it. Whence, the sacramental formula pronounced in the marriage contract: *ducere uxorem liberum quaerendorum causa* (*ibid.* II, 3.52; Small, p. 65). 'Everything in the family was divine' (*ibid.* II, 9 109; Small, p. 129). 'Then a man loved his house as he now loves his Church' (*ibid.*). Even the slave was made a part of the household of the family by a religious ceremony analogous to that of marriage, and took part in the worship of the hearth. He was buried in the burial ground of the family whose Lares had been his gods (*ibid.* II, 10 127; Small, p. 150).

6 *Ibid.* III 3, 147; Small, pp. 172-173.

today of 'one world,' we are retarding the course of the history of philosophy. We understand by that expression that the earth is one, whereas the Stoics already thought the universe to be one. Moreover, how could it be at all, if it were not one? The acceptance of the cosmic order and, with it, of everything independent of us becomes from that time on the first rule of wisdom. By this acceptance the wise man considers himself part and parcel of an infinitely vaster order than the particular political society in whose bosom he was born. 'O Universe,' exclaimed Marcus Aurelius,[7] 'all that is in tune with thee is in tune with me. Nothing that is in due time for thee is too early or too late for me! All that thy seasons bring, O Nature, is fruit for me! All things come from thee, are in thee, go back to thee. There is one who says: Dear City of Cecrops! Wilt thou not say: O dear City of Zeus?' In this sense it is indeed true to say that to be a citizen of the universe is to be a citizen of the highest state, of which all other states are but households.[8]

But, is it really a question here of a city? When Marcus Aurelius said: 'As Antoninus, my country is Rome; as a man, the world,'[9] he uttered a noble phrase. But, does country mean the same in both cases? It is doubtful. For him, Rome is a society of men; the world is the order of things. The wise Stoic is a cosmopolitan. But, on the one hand,

7 *To Himself* 4.23 (Loeb Classical Library, p. 81).

8 *Ibid.* 3.11 (Loeb, p. 59). Cf. Seneca, *On Tranquility of Mind* 4.4: 'The very reason for our magnanimity in not shutting ourselves up within the walls of one city, in going forth into intercourse with the whole earth, and in claiming the world as our country, was that we might have a wider field for our virtue' (Loeb, p. 229). Cf. *To Helvia on Consolation,* 9.1,7.

9 Marcus Aurelius, *To Himself,* 4.44.

the universe is a whole much vaster than any society, even if extended to the uttermost bounds of the earth; on the other hand, it would be impossible to be actually a citizen of the universe, because the *cosmos* is not a society. To enter into a universal physical order, whose laws we accept and of which we conceive ourselves as part and parcel, can well be an act of wisdom, but it is not the performance of an act of citizenship. In fact, the Stoics do not seem to have conceived the ideal of a universal society co-extensive with our planet and capable of uniting the whole of humanity.

It is not impossible, however, that their cosmopolitanism indirectly contributed to the birth of such an idea.[10] For, they conceived of the universe as unified and bound together by a force of 'harmony' or of 'sympathy' (*homónoia*); and this could prompt the desire of uniting all men by the bond of one and the same law. If we can rely on the testimony of Eratosthenes,[11] Alexander the Great was convinced that men should be divided only into good and bad. This was contrary to the advice of those who divided men into Greeks and barbarians; and who advised Alexander to treat the former as friends, the latter as enemies. Still more precisely, Plutarch[12] insists that Alexander undertook the

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10 Cf. W.W.Tarn, 'Alexander and the Unity of Mankind,' in *Proceedings of the British Academy*, XIX, pp. 16-17, 28.

11 Strabo, *Geography*, I.4.9 (Loeb, p. 249).

12 Plutarch, *Moralia, On the Fortune or Virtue of Alexander* 1.5-6 (Loeb, vol. IV, pp. 395-7). Several historians rely on this testimony and one or two other similar ones in giving Alexander the honor of creating a great intellectual revolution, the necessary prelude to the future imperial system of the Western world. Cf. W.W.Tarn, *op. cit.*, and also E. Barker, *Church, State and Study* (London 1930), 3. Without pretending to read the mind of Alexander, placed so far as we are from him in history, at least we can say that he was somewhat too much in love with conquest; consequently, the ideal attributed to him by Plutarch and other historians was less clearly outlined in Alexander's mind than they would have us believe. Even if we grant that Alexander

immense task of being not only the conqueror, but also the civilizer of the globe. Along with the Greek religion and Greek philosophy, he introduced everywhere the common order, which respect for his own laws imposed. Conquer to civilize, civilize to unite—such, it seems, was his ideal. Doubtless, it would be imprudent to attribute a solid historical value to this testimony. But, even if we admit that Plutarch has ascribed his own Stoicism to a warrior whose ambition could just as well explain his undertakings, the fact remains that the progressive conquest of the Greek states and the Oriental peoples, followed by their absorption into the unity of a single empire, could well appear as a rough draft of a universal society. This prodigious expansion of the Greek city by force of arms necessarily implied a corresponding religious conquest or, at least, an effort to bring it about. In securing his political domination, Alexander did not fail to introduce the gods of Hellas into the conquered countries; we are not even surprised that he aimed at completing his work by demanding from the Macedonians and the Greeks recognition of his own divinity. Callisthenes, the philosopher and nephew of Aristotle, resolutely opposed this move and was put to death in 327 B.C., at Alexander's command.

A like evolution took place in the history of Rome. There, the Latin Stoicism of a Seneca adapted itself very well to a single country, namely, the world. A single city, common

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invented the political notion of an empire, a fact which is not at all certain, and suppose that he colored it with a humanitarian ideology, which is still less sure, we certainly could not compare it with the teaching of St. Paul, as E. Barker has done (*op. cit.* 4). It would be pure equivocation to compare two systems so essentially different. All these interpretations, including my own, are disputable; against which an antidote can be found in R. W. and A. J. Carlyle, *A History of Mediaeval Political Theory in the West* I (London 1903), 8ff.

to men and to the gods, embracing the whole of reality, bound together by the necessity of its laws—the universe is truly the country of the wise Stoic, if he can be said to have a country.[13] But here, once again, the field which is open for the practice of his virtue is a *cosmos* rather than a true society. Even if we admit that the Roman Empire, the successor to that of Alexander (whose image decorated the seal of Augustus), was able to give support to the illusion of Seneca, we must remember that the Stoic recognition of the unity of the world is not commensurable with the political unity resulting from conquest. The Roman Law imposed by Augustus does not have the same nature as the cosmic order to which the Stoic was subject. In short, even to suppose that Stoic dialectic made possible the reduction of one to the other, there still is required the resigned consent of the peoples of the earth to state domination, and, in the final analysis, the domination of one man; and this will not constitute the heartily desired and willingly maintained union which every society worthy of the name takes for granted. Here, as in the case of his Macedonian predecessor, the divinity of the emperor expresses nothing more than a necessity bound up with the very nature of the ancient city.[14]

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13 Cf. Seneca, *To Marcia, Consolation,* 18.1-2 (Loeb, p. 59), E. Barker, *op. cit.* 6-11. It is not a question here of either denying or minimizing the Stoic texts, where all men are invited to consider themselves as members of one and the same society, but to state precisely that this unity is bound up with the unity of the cosmos, of which society is but one aspect. It is exact to say that Stoicism produced effects of denationalization analogous to those which we observe among some Christians; however, to admit citizenship of the world and to desire citizenship in a human universal society are quite different; this remains true even if this society, although not founded on a rejection of the world, professes to have nothing to do with it.

14 Cf. G. Boissier, *La religion romaine* (Paris 1874) I, 173-177; cf., also, the facts noted by E. Barker, *op. cit.* 4-6 and 11-20; also his bibliography on p. 5, n. 2.

It is a mistake to make Augustus the pioneer of a political revolution of world significance, or to make Alexander the apostle of the brotherhood of men and the pioneer of the union of the human race. The executioner of Callisthenes had no right to this honor, and it was a pure justification of force that Augustus demanded of the sacred character of the law.

The meaning of these reservations requires a more detailed account. It is indisputable that all these events and teachings are so many symptoms of a more or less confused desire to unite all men into a universal society. The empires of Alexander and Augustus effectively broke down national barriers, and probably encouraged the budding forth of feelings of community more open than those which ordinarily accompany local nationalisms, whether political or religious. It is certainly not impossible that Alexander and especially Augustus colored their imperialisms with more or less vague ideological justifications. However suspicious they appear as mirrored in romantic history, those of the ancients who affirm this fact could not have entirely invented it, and their modern successors, if such is their choice, have a right to follow them. Stoicism is a still more significant symptom; first, because it was a revolution of the mind and no longer political, and also because it did a good deal to free the citizen from the limited framework of the ancient city by directly incorporating him into the universe.

Nevertheless, when all has been said and done, the problem remains unsolved. It is a question of finding out where and when the *idea* of a universal society of men first appeared. Even to suppose that a conqueror succeeded in subjugating the world, the idea of such an empire would still not be that of a society. Such a monarch would want the unity of all

in a common submission, not the union of all in an accord of wills. As for the Stoic, even if he does conceive of the universe as a society, he is not thinking of a society of men extending beyond the city, which would gather together all men on earth within the cosmos, and not be confused with or declared equal to it in extent. Neither in these endeavors nor in all this speculation do we see the idea of a universal social body emerge, which would be related to individual cities as the city itself is related to its families and through the families to the different individuals; in short, a human city worthy of the name. Without denying in any way that we ought to see in these events and ideas eloquent signs of the new idea, and without even debating whether they favored the flowering and growth of this idea, we still must admit that it has not yet arrived at fruition. In the exact form in which we have here described it, it has sprung neither from speculation on the cosmos nor from an empire, not even the Roman Empire.

However, it was in the Roman Empire and during the reign of Augustus that there appeared the gentle Founder of a truly universal society. Yet, the origins of this event, so decisive for the history of the world, are part and parcel of the history of the Jews.

From the time of Abraham this people was both different from and more than a simple race, since it was possible to gain membership in it by a rite, namely, that of circumcision.[15] Likewise, from that time the whole line of Abraham's descendants was blessed in the person of their ancestor and

15 The Scripture quotations to Old Testament are taken from *The Holy Bible,* published by John Murphy Co.; to the New Testament from the translation by Msgr. Ronald Knox. Circumcision was imposed by Abraham upon all the men of his house, as well as those who were born in his house, as the bought servants and strangers were circumcised with him. Cf. Gen. 17.27; 12-14.

chosen by Jahweh as His own people in which all the nations of the earth would be blessed.[16] The mysterious promise, made again to Isaac, was never revoked, but the people of Israel were not yet able to foresee how it would one day be fulfilled. As told by its priests, the history of this people was dominated by the covenant between God and itself, the terms of which Jahweh himself had dictated. The conditions of this covenant were simple: 'If therefore you will hear my voice, and keep my covenant, you shall be my peculiar possession above all people; for all the earth is mine. And you shall be to me a priestly kingdom, and a holy nation.' In short, and in simple terms: 'And I will take you to myself for my people, I will be your God.'[17] In exchange for the exclusive worship which the people of Israel would render Him, Jahweh assured them of His exclusive protection against all the other peoples of the earth. 'This day the Lord thy God hath commanded thee to do these commandments and judgments; and to keep and fulfill them with all thy heart, and with all thy soul. Thou hast chosen the Lord this day to be thy God, and to walk in his ways and keep his ceremonies and precepts and judgments, and obey his command. And the Lord hath chosen thee this day to be his peculiar people, as he hath spoken to thee, and to keep all his commandments; and to make thee higher than all nations, which he hath created, to his own praise, and name, and glory; that thou mayest be a holy people of the Lord thy God as he hath spoken.'[18]

16 Gen. 17.3-6; 18.18; 22.15-18. For the promise made again to Isaac, cf. Gen. 26.4-5.
17 *Exod.* 6.7; 19.5-6.
18 Deut. 26.16-19.

We could not imagine a more perfect expression of a more completely religious nationalism. Jahweh, the Creator of the universe, is also the Creator of the peoples. Like the universe itself, they belong to Him. Why should He not freely choose one of them from among all others to make of it His own people? Why should He not separate it from all others and freely make a covenant with it against the others?[19] That, in fact, is what happened; but, however the Jewish people understood this covenant, Jahweh alone knew the profound meaning of its terms and remained master of its interpretation.[20] If it is true that there is but one God, who alone is Creator and Sovereign of all peoples, why should he make a covenant with only one of them? That is what the Prophets of Israel finally asked themselves; not, indeed, all of them, nor with an equally clear knowledge of the ultimate implications of the problem; but some-

19 Lev. 20.26; Deut. 10.14-15, 28, 2.7,13. This testament between Jahweh and His people against other peoples did not exclude the obligations of justice and humanity toward the foreigners with whom the Jews were on friendly terms. Cf. *Lev.* 19.30-34; *Deut.* 27.19. On the contrary, it is difficult to find in ancient Israel, before the Prophets, a clearcut allusion to the possibility of a religious society outside the framework of the nation. There are some who doubt that the promise made by Jahweh to Abraham (Gen. 12.3) is to be interpreted in this sense. Cf., on this point, A. Causse, *Israel et la vision de l'humanité* (Strasbourg 1924) 16, n. 2. However, it is difficult for us, instructed by later history, to understand it otherwise.

20 This covenant implies that the Jewish people were not yet completely freed from polytheism at this period. If they constantly kept falling back into idolatry, it was because they considered the gods of other nations as proper to those nations, and Jahweh as their own God. 'Are not those things which thy god Chamos possesseth, due to thee by right? But what the Lord our God hath obtained by conquest shall be our possession.' (*Judges* 11.24). Cf. A. Lods, *Israel des origines au milieu du VIII*me *siècle* (Paris 1932) 526-529. This work points out the already clearly defined tendencies to montheism in ancient Israel. Let us add that the notion of Jahweh as *He Who Is,* however it was first understood, ought to have led Israel to a strict monotheism. Cf. E. Gilson, *L'esprit de la philosophie médiévale* I (Paris 1932) 53.

times in terms such as would irresistibly call forth the vision of an earth on which all peoples would finally be united in the adoration of the same God. Yet, even in the well-known texts, in which, by the mouth of Isaias, Jahweh called to Himself all the peoples of the earth, their salvation still remained bound up with the glory of Israel.[21] Established as the light of the nations in order that salvation might reach the ends of the earth,[22] Israel sometimes, like the prophet Jonas, rebelled against the mission entrusted to it by God.[23] And even those who did accept this mission never ceased to imagine a planet whose center would be the earthly Jerusalem. Jewish nationalism never sufficiently overcame itself to the extent that its religious universalism, of which monotheism was the germ, might completely triumph over its religious imperialism.

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21 'Judaism evolved between two poles without ever being able to overcome the contradiction between the original nationalism and the ethical aspirations which harassed the soul of Israel' (Cf. H. Causse, *op. cit.* 26). Perhaps it would be more exact to call these aspirations *religious*, for the Prophets are on a plane quite different from that of moralism. However, the formula is essentially true; cf. *Isaias* 45.20-25.

22 'And he said: It is a small thing that thou shouldst be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to convert the dregs of Israel. Behold, I have given thee to be the light of the Gentiles, that thou mayst be my salvation even to the farthest part of the earth.' (Isa. 49.6).

23 The prophecy of Jonas (4.10-11) is directed against the religious nationalism of certain Jews. Having received from Jahweh the order to go to Ninive to preach penance, Jonas fled to Tharsis, fearing that, if he converted the inhabitants of Ninive, Jahweh would not pardon them and Ninive would not be saved. That, in fact, is what happened. Brought back to Ninive by Jahweh, Jonas fulfilled his mission, saved Ninive, but underwent such remorse that he asked Jahweh that he might die. The closing chapter of the beautiful and instructive book emphasizes the idea of a Creator of all things, who is solicitous for all men and not only the Jews. This lesson, an unpleasant one for some Jews, attests the deep conviction which some of them felt regarding the necessarily universal character of the worship of Jahweh. The history of a Jewish prophet, constrained to convert Ninive and not Jerusalem, states the problem in marvelous outline, a problem which faced the Jews and which was resolved by Christianity.

The preaching of Jesus Christ was in Israel, by Israel, and, however little it consented, first of all for Israel; it was the liberation from the contradiction in which the Jewish people were involved. In bringing to all men the good news of salvation, the Gospel revealed to them, above all else, that they were all children of the same heavenly Father and brothers of the Son of God, who had become man to save them. That is why faith in the Word and Person of Christ became from that moment the bond of a religious society upon which neither race nor blood could impose limits. Purely spiritual in its essence, the family of God's children could still demand of its members the sensible sign of a rite, but of a rite which would henceforth be far different from circumcision. It is no longer a question of adopting a foreigner into a race or a people, but of introducing a new member into a spiritual society through purification from sin: 'He who believes and is baptized will be saved.'[24] From that time on, the evangelization of the whole world became a necessary task, for the propagation of salvation was henceforth one with that of the faith which saves: 'You, therefore, must go out, making disciples of all nations and baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all the commandments which I have given you. And behold I am with you all through the days that are coming, until the consummation of the world.'[25]

Yet, we know that after the death of Christ, even within the folds of the newborn Church, there were still some hesitations[26] and that for some time the distinction between

24 Mark 16.15-16.
25 Matt. 28.19-20.
26 Gal. 2.1-9.

the Church of the Synagogue and the Church of the Gentiles was continued. Finally, however, the message of St. Paul was to be understood by all: his mission was, in the name of Jesus Christ, to bring to the obedience of the faith all the Gentiles, both of Rome and Jerusalem, and, through those of Rome, the entire world.

Here, it is surely a question of a society, for the Church instituted by Christ[27] united men among themselves, not to the universe which surrounded them. It was indeed a society open to all, for the Gospel 'is an instrument of God's power that brings salvation to all who believe in it, Jew first and then Greek. It reveals God's way of justifying us, faith first and last; as the Scripture says. It is faith that brings life to the just man.'[28] Here, everything indicates that the society in question escaped, from its very beginning, the limits of space and time, for it laid claim to the mind alone. True circumcision is that of the heart.[29] Certainly, the Jewish people were somewhat privileged, since it was to them that the Word of God was first entrusted. But, the conditions of salvation henceforth were the same for all men. Going with incredible boldness to the heart of the matter, the Apostle affirmed that 'it was not through obedience to the law, but through faith justifying them, that Abraham and his posterity were promised the inheritance of the world.'[30]

If ever the word 'revelation' was admissible, here is certainly a case. By an extraordinary metamorphosis, the Jewish perspective suddenly changed into a Christian outlook, and

27 Matt. 16.18.
28 Rom. 1.16-17.
29 Rom. 2.25-29.
30 Rom. 4.13-17; 9.6-13.

at the exact moment when finally the message of Jesus unveiled the fullness of its meaning in the teaching of the Apostle. It straightway laid hold of the past and the future. Everything that the seed of Abraham had believed to be true according to the flesh henceforth appeared as true according to the spirit. That is why it thenceforth would be true to say that 'there is no distinction made here between Jew and Gentile; all alike have one Lord.'[31] The mystery which St. Paul had as his mission to announce is, in fact, nothing else than the mystery of Christ, namely, that 'the Gentiles are to win the same inheritance, to be made part of the same body, to share the same divine promise, in Christ Jesus.'[32] At the call of this universal vocation all barriers fall and all distinctions are abolished; in this sense, at least, that, taken in themselves and their own order, they cease to stand in the way of the universal union of all men into a single body whose soul is the faith. The true and authentic sons of Abraham are henceforth to be all who live by faith. 'Through faith in Jesus Christ you are all now God's sons. All you who have been baptized in Christ's name have put on the person of Christ; no more Jew or Gentile, no more slave and freeman, no more male and female; you are all one person in Jesus Christ. And if you belong to Christ, then you are indeed Abraham's children; the promised inheritance is yours.'[33]

It was not possible to dismiss more majestically the obstacles; it is important, however, to note that it is a question of transcending rather than abolishing them. The vast encum-

31 Rom. 10.12; Gal. 3.1-18.
32 Eph. 3.6-7.
33 Gal. 3.26-29. By recalling such texts, Auguste Comte was led to maintain that St. Paul, not Jesus Christ, was the true founder of Catholicism. After him, Charles Maurras insisted upon the same fanciful dissociation of a pure Catholicism and the Christianity of which it was born.

brances of the temporal still exist beneath the spiritual unity which was announced in the message of the Apostle. There are still men and women, bond and free, Jews and Greeks, an emperor who lays claim to taxes, and, finally, temporal authorities to whom obedience is due out of a divinely imposed duty.[34] How long would all that last? Doubtlessly, not long.[35] But, as long as it did endure, it had to be accepted. If there were no longer Jew or Greek, it does not mean that, in ceasing to be national, the Church became international. If there were no longer bond or free, it does not mean that, in freeing man from the Law by grace, the Church brought about an economic or social revolution. She no more does away with these distinctions than she does those of the two sexes; neither more nor less. In fact, she ignores them, because her kingdom is not of this world. Although the Christian lives upon this earth, his life as a Christian is spent in a 'city' which is not the earth, but heaven.[36]

This teaching brought Christianity to grips with formidable difficulties which it still faces in our own day. The first difficulty is concerned with the very universality of the society which it was to found. It affects at the same time both its foundation and its extent. It affects its foundation, because, if it rests on the common acceptance of a religious belief transcending reason, it can be made universal only through faith. But, the content of faith is not a knowledge which can rationally be made universal. Christian apologetics will, of course, bend all its efforts to place reason on the side of faith. It would even be maintained, taking everything into account, that the Christian faith was the most

34 Rom. 13.1-7.
35 Rom. 13.11-14.
36 Phil. 3.20.

reasonable thing in the world. But it is no less true that the act of faith in the Word of God would always be irreducibly distinguished from the simple assent to the evidence of a rational proposition. How, then, universalize that which of itself cannot humanly be made universal? In fact, it might well be that it alone can be made universal, but such a long time would be required before men would become aware of the fact that perhaps they have not yet realized it. In the meantime, the simple possibility of not giving assent to the faith implies the possibility of two societies instead of one, a possibility which would jeopardize the complete universality of the first. Open to all whom faith in the message and Person of Christ justifies, Christian society is immediately paralleled by another, to which belong all who exclude themselves from Christianity. Let us set aside the problems which the extension of Christian preaching presents, and let us not ask about the fate of men who could not or cannot be touched by its salutary message; these are different problems which, like those of grace, are based exclusively on theology. Let us consider only the problems which arise for those men who, although familiar with the demands of the Christian faith, refuse to accept it. How, then, by that very fact, would they not become members of a society quite contrary to the first, but which they enter of their own accord? The difficulty is perhaps inseparable from the notion of a true society, that is, one founded upon the consent of its members. A *cosmos* which is merely a fact, or an empire which is also merely a fact and whose cause is force, contains no such difficulty, precisely because neither is a real society. Perhaps we should conclude that there can be no truly universal society other than that which is open to all, and which, as a consequence, some are always free to reject. In the meantime, we should

keep before our mind the state of the question, which, it can be seen, is the very core of the problem.

A second problem directly concerns the possible relations between Christian society and the temporal order. Inasmuch as he believes in Christ, the Christian, we can say with St. Paul, lives not upon the earth but in heaven. Here, a new difficulty arises. For, if such is the faith of the Christian, the more intense it is, the more it will draw him away from a love of this world and especially from a love of the city. It is not surprising, therefore, that one of the outstanding effects of Christianity was denationalization. From this distance and with the few documents at our disposal, it is difficult to appraise the intensity, or appreciate the extent, of this process. However, it must be taken into account, because it remains today one of the constant manifestations of the problem, and because, in fact, denationalization certainly did occur. As early as the second century, in the *Apology* of Quadratus (which was thought lost, but which we may possess under the title, *Letter to Diognetus*), the double life, as it were, which the Christian religion imposed upon its members, is described with a truly surprising sharpness. Exteriorly, Christians differ in no way from the other men whose cities, language and customs they share. They are not men without a country. Neither are they nationals like the others, for 'they live, each in his native land—but as though they were not really at home there. They share in all duties like citizens, yet suffer hardships like strangers. Every foreign land is for them a fatherland and every fatherland is a foreign land.'[37] How could it be otherwise, if, while on earth, they have chosen heaven as their abode? The curious statement of Tertullian

37 *The Epistle to Diognetus,* tr. by G.G.Walsh, in *The Apostolic Fathers* (New York 1947) 359, in this series.

bears the same meaning: 'Nor is there aught more entirely foreign to us than affairs of state. We acknowledge one all-embracing commonwealth, the world.'[38] It is a formula with a distinctive Stoic ring, but which, as one historian has justly remarked, nevertheless defines a paradoxically different position: 'a cosmopolitanism based on an acosmism.'[39] In fact, as we shall see when we examine the thought of St. Augustine on this point, at the moment the Christian stand on the problem is defined, it is straightway resolved. For, it is correct to say that the Christian is no longer a member of the *cosmos* conceived in a Stoic sense; hence, he is no longer cosmopolitan in the Stoic sense of the term. However, we might wonder whether Christianity has not transformed the very notion of *cosmos* to the point of making it a true society; in which case the notion of Christian cosmopolitanism would carry a precise meeting.

Whatever we make of the point, the effect of denationalization upon some Christians, due to their integration in a society other than that of their earthly country, seems to be an incontestable fact. How many times have they not been reproached for it! Not only did they refuse to the gods of the empire the worship which was demanded—and this was enough to exclude them from their country—but, like Tertullian, they were disinterested in it to the point of considering themselves as foreigners. Harnack has both force-

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38 Tertullian, *Apologeticum* 38, The play on words is lost in English: *(Nobis nulla magis res aliena est quam publica. Unam omnium rempublicam agnoscimus, mundum.'*

39 *'Es ist ein Kosmopolitismus auf akosmistischer Grundlage'* (H. Scholz, *Glaube und Unglaube in der Weltgeschichte. Ein Kommentar zu Augustinus De Civitate Dei, mit einem Exkurs: Fruitio Dei, ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Theologie und der Mystik* [Leipzig 1911] 95). For further texts of analogous content, cf. A. Combes, *La doctrine politique de Saint Augustine* (Paris 1927) 217-218.

fully and rightly insisted on this meaning of the *True Discourse* of Celsus. This was his advice to the Christians: Do not put yourselves on the fringes of the Empire, and we shall try to put up with you.[40] And now, we, in our turn, must insist that the moment the problem is first posed the question arises whether the very essence of Christianity does not inevitably produce such a problem. From his own point of view, Celsus was right in compelling Christians to choose between the two cities, one of which they used without loving, the other they lovingly served at the very time they made their abode in the first. 'They must make their choice between two alternatives. If they refuse to render due service to the gods, and to respect those who are set over this service, let them not come to manhood, or marry wives, or have children, or indeed take any share in the affairs of life; but let them depart hence with all speed and leave no posterity behind them, that such a race may become extinct from the face of the earth. Or, on the other hand, if they will take wives, and bring up children, and taste the fruits of the earth, and partake of all the blessings of life, and bear its appointed sorrows (for nature herself hath allotted sorrows to all men; for sorrows must exist, and earth is the only place for them), then must they discharge the duties of life until they are released from its bonds, and render due honour to those beings who control the

40 A. von Harnack, *Mission und Ausbreitung des Christentums in den ersten drei Jahrhunderten,* (2 vol., Berlin 1934) I 47ff., in English translation, *The expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries,* by James Moffat (New York 1904) I 342ff. Cf. texts of Celsus in Origen, *Against Celsus* 8.55; also, Pierre de Labriolle, *La réaction Païenne,* (Paris 1934) 121-122. M. Labriolle maintains that the texts of Celsus are less profound and sincere than von Harnack pretends. Fundamentally, however, he agrees with von Harnack, who is judging the situation not from the texts of Celsus alone, but from an overall view of the facts, and in this he is quite correct. Cf. Labriolle, *op. cit.* 169.

affairs of this life, if they would not show themselves ungrateful to them. For it would be unjust in them, after receiving the good things which they dispense, to pay them no tribute in return.'[41]

Certainly, the Christians were not without a reply. They could proclaim their loyalty to the Empire, excluding, of course, its worship and its gods. In addition to raising objections respecting the divinity of the emperor, which was inseparable from the Empire, it was called to their attention that, if their city was really not of this world, they ought to quit it. The Fathers of the desert were Christians after Celsus' own heart and, in a sense, they almost corroborated his point of view. In a somewhat different sense, Origen himself propounds almost the same opinion when, in his reply to Celsus, he says that the Christians were not without a country, since they found one in their churches. It is to answer the question by asking it; it is the question which, we have seen, is at the very heart of the history whose outstanding features are being portrayed.

We do not claim that Christianity presented men with an insoluble antinomy; rather, the contrary is true, since, whatever were their ideas, it was necessary for them to adapt themselves. But, Christianity certainly did provoke a conflict of tendencies between those who, devoted entirely to their earthly home, have no conception of anything beyond it and those who are, above all, citizens of the heavenly City and, consequently, are more or less inclined to be disinterested

41 *Ibid.*

in their home here below.[42] Such a man was Tertullian; such also was Origen, who, without denying that Christianity could better morality and so help the State, is nevertheless described to us as having only a 'mediocre interest' in the State, and as living on this earth as in a metaphysical dream, or, perhaps more correctly, in a religious dream. If, indeed, Origen intended that all cultivated Christians should reserve their activity for the service of the churches, the true body of their own country (*systema patrídos*), and which were installed in every city,[43] then let us admit that a pagan, like Celsus, could be excused for maintaining that Christianity was, if not seditious, at least a malady of the body politic.

Some of the first Christians discovered, and put into practice, one of the possible answers to the new question raised by Christianity; it was to renounce the world, that is, to renounce the city. There were others, however, to whom the diffusion of the Gospel could not help suggesting a quite different, even contrary, solution. It was to Christianize the city rather than renounce it, and, in Christianizing it, to take it over. There is no proof that this was Constantine's idea; that is a secret which evades the historian, like other problems springing from the psychology of one individual. Whatever were the motives which swayed him, the conversion of a Roman emperor to Christianity is nonetheless an

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42 This totalitarianism of the State is, let us recall, in the whole pagan notion of the city. It is clearly affirmed by Aristotle in the *Politics* 8.1 (1337a27-30): 'Neither must we suppose that any one of the citizens belongs to himself, for they all belong to the State, and are each of them a part of the State, and the care of each part is inseparable from the care of the whole' (Ross translation). This problem is still quite familiar. For the Greek notion of the State, cf. de Coulanges, *op. cit.*, Bk. III, and E. Barker, *Greek Political Theory. Plato and his Predecessors* (London 1918), Ch. 1.

43 P. de Labriolle, *op. cit.* 168-9.

historical fact of capital importance; however, it is perhaps less important in its consequences than in the testimony it gives of the conditions which brought about such a conversion.[44]

Thereby, and it is the least we can say, the Empire came to terms with the Church, or, in other words, allowed itself to be Christianized. Henceforth, the Christians found themselves in a completely new world. Henceforth, it was possible to give an unreserved loyalty to the Empire, that is, to serve the emperor without betraying God. A short time before, the Christian had been a member of a persecuted minority, or, in the best of conditions, living on the outer fringes of the State; now, however, he had become a subject of a master who, in turn, recognized that he himself owed allegiance to the same supreme Master as his own subjects. Thus, the Christian citizen became the normal case instead of an anomaly, and the day was clearly dawning when, for all practical purposes, the qualities of member of the Church and member of the State would coincide.[45] Thereafter, as was justly remarked, it became impossible for the members of the ecclesiastical hierarchy not to be, sooner or later, members of the hierarchy which, under the emperor's authority, ruled the State. The religious authority which the emperor was to recognize in them also conferred upon them a moral authority, which was not slow in making itself felt

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44 Cf. Norman Baynes, 'Constantine the Great and the Christian Church,' in *Proceedings of the British Academy* XV (1929). Mr. Baynes maintains that the dominant motive in Constantine's actions was his conviction of a personal mission entrusted to him by the Christian God. However, Christopher Dawson, *The Making of Europe* (London 1932) 34, states that 'Whether Constantine himself was moved by considerations of policy in his attitude to Christianity is a debatable point.' However, he does not question Constantine's sincerity.

45 'The citizenship of the future lay in the membership of the Church.' (Dawson, *op. cit.* 35).

by remonstrances and even reprimands. Eusebius of Caesarea in the East and St. Ambrose in the West did not hesitate to make public use of it to such a degree that they are recognized as the first exponents of the ideal of a Christian state.[46] Even if we admit that the notion was not yet clearly defined when, in 390 A.D., Ambrose severely reprimanded the Emperor Theodosius for the massacre of Salonika, it seems undeniable that there was already the beginning of an awareness of this authority, or, at least, of its possibility in principle.

In the immediate, but definitively ended, past, it was not possible to serve God and the Empire simultaneously with the same affection. Thereafter, the contrary was to be true; Ambrose assured the Emperor Gratian that, when his subjects betrayed God, they betrayed the Empire, a point which the Arian rebellion against the faith manifestly proves. Henceforth, the unity of the Empire was to be bound up with the unity of the faith.[47]

Thus did the holy people, described in the Old Testament, rebuild itself in the light of the New. It was the same history, since, basically, it was the same people, but this time

46 Cf. Dawson, *op. cit.* 44, for an excellent description of the new attitude which a Christian ought to have toward the State.

47 'There is no doubt, Holy Emperor, because we have taken up arms against the perfidious aliens, we shall receive the aid of the Catholic faith which is so strong in you. There is clearly before us a cause for divine wrath, because, where faith with God is broken straightway faith with the Roman Empire is broken.' (St. Ambrose, *De fide* 3.16.139 [*PL* 16.612B]). Cf., also, St. Ambrose, *Letter* II 4 (*PL* 16.986, where the heretic is represented as a danger to the body politic. Also to be noted, in this regard, is the fact that St. Ambrose, like many in the era of Gregory VII, is already anticipating some of the main theses of St. Peter Damian. Cf. St. Ambrose, *De fide* 1.5, 41-2 [*PL* 16.559]; 1, 13, 84-85; [*PL* 16.570-71]; 4, 8, 78, [PL 16.658]; *De Incarnatione* 9. 89, [PL. 16.876]. As St. Ambrose himself says, 'it is not the law, but the faith of Christ which has built the unity of the Church.' *Letter 21* 24, [*PL* 16.1057B].

spread out over the whole known world, and, potentially, the master of what yet remained to be discovered or conquered. Under a holy emperor, this people was allied by the same treaty with God, from whom they hoped for union, peace and prosperity in this world, while awaiting the glory of the next. And what could be more wise and more reasonable! Since the Empire was Christian, why should the Church not protect the Empire? Was it not apparent that God Himself in His providence had intended the Roman Empire of Augustus to prepare for His Church a world already politically unified and at peace? Only baptize this Empire, and it could become the center of a Christian universal society, so that, by the very fact of being a Christian, a man could enjoy membership in that society.

At least there were Christians who thought so, and no one expressed the idea better than the poet Prudentius in his poem against the pagan Symmachus, which was composed between the years 385 and 388. The Roman Empire clearly appeared to him as the providential preparation of a universal society of men joined together by the bonds of Christianity. The evidence he adduces is striking, even to us. A Christian patriotism, that is, a love for Rome justified by Christianity itself, was henceforth both conceivable and natural.[48] The history of Rome became thereby an integral part of the universal history, which had as its central theme the Incarnation of Christ, and which would be for so many of the early Christians the only intelligible and true history of mankind. 'We live in every clime, as if a paternal city enclosed within its single walls citizens of a single birthplace; we are all one in heart within our paternal hearth. Now, men from afar and over land and sea appear before a single and common court;

48 G. Boissier, *La fin du paganisme* II 153.

now, for business and the arts they gather together in the great assembly; now, they contract marriages and one people is formed from the mingling of different blood. This has been achieved by so many triumphant successes of the Roman Empire, believe me, that the way had been prepared for Christ's advent, a way which the communal friendship of our peace has built under Roman guidance. For, what place could there be for God in a savage world, in the discordant breasts of men and in those who guard their own rights by different laws, as was formerly the case? But, if the mind, from its lofty throne, bridle impulsive rage and the rebellious organs and bring every passion under the sway of reason, then is built a stable way of life; then with surety does it drink in God and live in submission to the one Lord. Omnipotent One, now is Your hour; penetrate the earth where no discord reigns. Now, O Christ, the world accepts You, this world which peace and Rome together hold within their grasp.'[49] It was a glorious hope, but the Roman Empire

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49 Prudentius, *Contra Symmachum* 2.609-635. Cf. C. Dawson, *op cit.* 23. G. Boissier, *op. cit.* II 137, quotes similar texts from Claudian and Rutilius Namatianus. Cf. Claudian, *On Stilicho's Consulship* 3.150: 'Tis she alone who has received the conquered into her bosom and like a mother, not an empress, protected the human race with a common name, summoning those whom she defeated to share her citizenship and drawing together distant races with bonds of affection' (Loeb, vol. II, p. 53). Also, Rutilius Namatianus, *De reditu suo* 61ff., trans. by F. Savage-Armstrong, in Charles H. Keene, ed., *Rutilius Claudius Namatianus, De Reditu Suo,* libri duo (London 1907).

> 'One thou hast made for all, one Fatherland,
> Fierce lords learn kindness from thy flag unfurled,
> With conquered men thou sharest thine own rule,
> One City made from what was once the world.'

Rutilius wrote after the sack of Rome, but drew no Christian conclusion from this event. To him, it seemed that the gods were on the side of Rome, and not Rome on the side of God (cf. verses 40 and 331). The idea of the Roman Empire being willed by God as a preparation for the Church is found again in Dante; cf. *De monarchia* 2.13-45 and *passim, ed.* W. H. V. Reade (Oxford 1916).

was beginning to fall at the precise moment when Christians thought of making full use of it.

On August 24, 410, Alaric entered Rome, and, although a Christian, pillaged the city for a period of three days. On the fourth day, his troops left the city, carrying off vast booty and leaving behind a mass of corpses and ruins. Thus, for the first time, an empire fell at the very moment the Church was hoping to find a support in it. This was not, however, to be the last time. Nevertheless, out of many similar experiences, this one remains, in a sense, the most striking; for, it seemed at first glance that the fall of Rome would bring about that of the Church. However, it was the body of the faithful united only by the faith of Christ, rather than the political Colossus united by arms, which survived.

Such a lesson is not easily forgotten. The capture of Rome by the barbarians made a deep impression upon the entire Empire. The endless polemics between Christians and pagans increased in violence and bitterness.[50] To analyze all the arguments of both sides would be a task both long and detailed, and, like the polemics themselves, would not bring us to any goal. On the pagan side, there were two principal and simple arguments from which all the others directly or indirectly stemmed. First of all, Christian doctrine taught renouncement of the world; consequently, it turned the citizen away from the service of the state, a fact which brought about the fall of Rome. Secondly, the destiny of Rome was always bound up with the worship of her gods. When the Christian religion first began to spread, the pagans

50 Cf. G. Boissier, *op. cit.*, especially the chapter entitled 'L'Affaire de l'autel de la Victoire' II 231-291.

proclaimed that their betrayed gods would visit terrible punishments upon the Empire. No one would listen, but the turn of events finally had justified their prophecy, and to such an extent that it was no longer possible to refuse them a hearing. The Empire had become Christian and it was during the reign of a Christian emperor that Rome, for the first time in her long history, was conquered and sacked. How could anyone fail to understand a lesson so tragically clear?

These objections were set down, as clearly as one could want, in a letter from Marcellinus to the Bishop of Hippo. In 412, the pagan Volusianus had addressed these objections to Marcellinus, who in turn immediately begged Augustine to write a reply. According to Marcellinus, Volusianus raised the objection that the preaching and teaching of Christ was in no way compatible with the duties and rights of citizens; for, to quote an instance frequently alleged, among its precepts there is found: 'Do not repay injury with injury,'[51] and, 'if a man strikes thee on thy right cheek, turn the other cheek also towards him; if he is ready to go to law with thee over thy coat, let him have it and thy cloak with it, if he compels thee to attend him on a mile's journey, go two miles with him.'[52] Now, it seems clear that such moral norms could not be put into practice without bringing ruin to a country. Who would suffer without retaliation the seizure of his goods by an enemy? Would anyone, thenceforth, refuse to punish according to the laws of war the devastation of a Roman province? These are arguments with which we are familiar, and which are constantly being revived by 'conscientious objectors.' They are based upon the deepest

51 Rom. 12.17.
52 Matt. 6.39-42.

convictions of a Christian conscience, whose strength it would be wrong to ignore. It is worth noting that the Christian Marcellinus, and not the pagan Volusianus, raised the last and most formidable argument, namely, that 'it is manifest that very great calamities have befallen the country under the government of emperors practising, for the most part, the Christian religion.'[53]

The objection was urgent, and St. Augustine was not slow to reply. He had been asked how it was possible to live in the State as a Christian, and how it was possible for a State composed of Christians to endure, since the practice of the Christian virtues would infallibly bring about the ruin of the State. To this St. Augustine makes an unexpected reply, namely, that the pagans themselves have already preached the same virtues for which the Christians are being blamed. It was scarcely necessary to recall this fact to such a cultured man as Volusianus. Did not Sallust praise the Romans for having chosen to forget injuries rather than punish the offender? Did not Cicero praise Caesar because he was wont to forget nothing but the wrongs done to him?[54] If we are to judge from the history of Rome, the observance of these laws has not worked out too badly. Again, it is necessary to understand what the Gospel teaches. There are no commandments compelling Christian soldiers to lay down their arms or to refuse service. In fact, no one is forbidden to give himself generously to the service of the State. On the contrary, rather, let them give us such husbands and wives, parents and children, such masters and slaves, such kings and judges, such taxpayers and tax collectors, as the Chris-

53 St Augustine, *Letter 136* 2, trans. by J. G. Cunningham, in edition by Marcus Dods (Edinburgh 1875) II 175.

54 Sallust, *The War with Catiline* 9.5 (Loeb, p. 17). Cicero, *Pro Ligario* 12.35. Cf. St Augustine, *The City of God* 2.18.2.

tian religion has taught that men should be, and then let them dare say that it is adverse to the State's well-being; rather, let them no longer hesitate to confess that this doctrine, if it were obeyed, would be the salvation of the Empire.[55]

But, how explain the fact that these calamities have befallen Rome at the hands of certain Christian emperors? Simply by denying the fact. It was not the Christianity of the emperors which brought ruin upon the Empire; rather, it was the vices within the Empire itself. For, whither might not men have been carried away by the flood of appalling wickedness, had God not finally planted the Cross of Christ there? Read Sallust and Juvenal, and the lengths to which immorality had gone will readily be seen.[56] Nascent Christianity is being blamed; the blame, however, should fall upon dying paganism. Christian revelation had two distinct ends: first, to save human society; second, to build up a society which could be divine. It is difficult to see what the State could fear from this twofold endeavor; but, what the State could gain thereby is readily apparent, for Christianity will achieve the first in striving after the second.

First, to save the political, human and natural society from the inevitable ruin whither its corruption was ineluctably leading it. It is not ignorance of the virtues required to secure happiness and prosperity which is endangering Roman society. Its members are very well aware of the obligations imposed by a merely natural love of the Empire, whose greatness was due to its past virtues, but which its citizens have not the courage to put into practice. But, what they did not have the strength to do out of love of country, the Christian God demands of them out of love of Himself.

55 St. Augustine, *Letter 138* 2 15 (Dods ed. 206).
56 *The City of God* 2.19.

Thus, in the general breakdown of morality and of civic virtues, divine Authority intervened to impose frugal living, continence, friendship, justice and concord among citizens. Henceforth, everyone professing Christian teaching and observing its precepts will, out of love of God, perform whatever the welfare of the country demands out of self-interest and on its own behalf.[57] Augustine was already enuntiating the great principle which is to justify, always and everywhere, the penetration of the Church into every human city: Take to yourselves good Christians and you will be given good citizens. Of course, the exigencies of the Gospel will never be fully satisfied in this way. But, neither will those of the world be satisfied in any other way, once the most ardently genuine followers of the Gospel are resigned finally to live in it; and whose goods, in spite of everything, it is difficult to enjoy without ever making any return. On the supposition that Christ did not expressly reserve for Himself the things that are Caesar's there still remains the problem of moral equity, concerning whose correct solution there could be no hesitation.

Let us admit that the Christian virtues are useful to the good order and prosperity of the commonwealth; still, it is no less true that this order and prosperity cannot be their proper end. This fact makes it quite clear that, to the extent the State can be sure of the practice of the natural moral virtues, of itself it can secure its own prosperity. Such was eminently the case in the early days of Rome, whose virtues St. Augustine, following the best traditions of the Latin historians, did not hesitate to praise. Did not ancient Rome owe its great success to the frugality, strength and purity of

57 St. Augustine, *Letter 138* 3.17 (Dods ed. 208).

its way of life? Again, do not the origins of its decline date from the decadence of its way of life, described so often by its historians and poets? Far from being embarrassed by the memory of a prosperous, although pagan, Rome, St. Augustine sees in this prosperity the sign of a providential plan. If God allowed this temporal greatness, which was obtained through mere civic virtues, it was precisely in order that no one might be deceived about the proper end of the Christian virtues. Since the world can enjoy prosperity without the Christian virtues, then, certainly, they do not exist in the view of the world. 'For in the most opulent and illustrious Empire of Rome, God has shown how great is the influence of even civil virtues without true religion, in order that it might be understood that, when this is added to such virtues, men are made citizens of another Commonwealth, of which the king is Truth, the law is Love and the duration is Eternity.'[58] The sufficiency of the political virtues in their own order testifies to the supernatural specification of the Christian virtues both in their essence and their end.

Thenceforth, two cities would always be present to the thought of St. Augustine. To free the Church from all responsibility for the evils which had befallen Rome was, for him, something else than to plead a losing cause after the fashion of a shrewd lawyer. Since, as the Roman writers admit, the decadence of the Empire and the causes of the decadence antedate the advent of Christianity, responsibility for the decadence cannot be laid upon Christianity. Nevertheless, the disaster of 410 faced them. Moreover, the pagans never wearied of using this argument to the full, an argument which, it must be agreed, was clothed

58 *Ibid.*

in the garb of apparent truth. That is why, in 413, St. Augustine took upon himself the task of writing a reply. In his *Retractations,* St. Augustine writes: 'When Rome was devastated as a result of the invasion of the Goths under the leadership of Alaric, the worshippers of the many false gods, whom we are accustomed to call pagan, began, in their attempt to blame this devastation on the Christian religion, to blaspheme the true God with more bitterness and sharpness than usual. Wherefore, fired with a zeal for God's house, I determined to write my book, *The City of God,* against their blasphemies and errors.'[59]

Of the twenty-two books which make up this work, the last twelve are principally dedicated to a retracing of the history of the 'two cities,' the City of God and the city of this world, from their beginnings until their end which is yet to come. If the work is entitled *The City of God,* it is only because he has chosen the title from the more noble of the two; nevertheless, it contains the history of both cities. Augustine was not deceived about the real object of his work, an enterprise dictated by the pressure of circumstances and perhaps suggested by a question of Marcellinus, to whom the work was dedicated.[60]

The work actually contains a great deal more than a vindication of the Church from the accusation of a given moment. The drama, whose vicissitudes the work aims at relating and interpreting, is literally of cosmic significance,

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59 St. Augustine, *Retractations* 2.43.2.

60 St. Augustine, *The City of God* I (Preface). A recently discovered letter of St. Augustine, translated below (pp. 399-401), bears upon the author's purpose in composing the work and gives his summation of the contents of the several parts. [Eds.]

because it identifies itself with the history of the world. The message which the Bishop of Hippo addresses to men is to the effect that the whole world, from its beginning until its final term, has as its unique end the constitution of a holy Society, in view of which everything has been made, even the universe itself. Perhaps never in the history of human speculation has the notion of society undergone a change comparable in depth, or provoked such an enlarged perspective in view of the change. Here, the City extends more than to the very limits of the earth or world; it includes the world and explains even the very existence of the world. Everything that is, except God Himself whose work the City is, is for the City and has no meaning apart from the City; if it is possible to have faith in the ultimate intelligibility of the smallest event and the humblest of creatures, it is the City of God which possesses the secret.

II

The City of God and Universal Society

What is a city, considered not in the material, but in the social, sense of the term? In vain would we search *The City of God,* vast as its scope is, for an abstract and general discussion of the problem as the philosophers envisaged it in their attempt to define the nature of the social bond. St. Augustine pursued his proper objective through innumberable digressions, which can be called, not improperly, apolo-

getic.[61] In more than one discussion, however, he does come to grips with the problem, where philosophy as such is judged from a Christian point of view. This is precisely the case with the notion of the term 'city.' He does not discuss the nature of the city as a philosopher indifferent to Christianity, nor as a Christian indifferent to philosophy, but as a Christian who judges and, if necessary, reshapes its elements in the light of faith.

When St. Augustine speaks of a human city, he is first of all thinking of Rome and its history, such as the Latin writers had described it to him.[62] If he was able to refute the charge that the Church had caused the ruin of Rome, it was, as we have seen, because Sallust himself had considered Rome to be in ruins as a result of its own vices, and that even before the advent of Christ. When St. Augustine asked himself at what moment of its history Rome merited the name of city, it was to a pagan definition of a city that he appealed. Thus, in passing judgment on pagan society according to the laws set down by that society, he drew his inspiration from rules which pagan society itself had to admit.

As St. Augustine saw it, the dominant feature in the pagan concept of the city, which is both a political and a social body, was the notion of justice. As Cicero, for ex-

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61 H. Scholz, *Glaube und Unglaube,* iv. The author contradicts those who see in *The City of God* a philosophy of history. In this he is quite correct; however, it does not exclude the possibility of a philosophy of history being derived several centuries later from *The City of God.* According to Scholz, the central theme of the work is the struggle between faith and infidelity (p.2). This is a quite reasonable conclusion; however, the simplest view, it would seem, is to admit that the central theme of *The City of God* is, precisely, the City of God.

62 City signifies society: *'civitas quae nihil aliud est quam hominum multitudo aliquo societatis vinculo colligata'* (*The City of God* 15.8).

ample, conceived it, every society should resemble a symphonic concert, in which the different notes of the instruments and voices blend into a final harmony. What the musician calls harmony, the politician calls concord. Without concord, there is no city; but, without justice, there is no concord. Consequently, justice is the first condition required for the existence of the city. That is why St. Augustine felt justified in concluding that, in spite of appearances to the contrary, Rome had ceased to exist at the moment when, according to one historian, Rome had lost all justice. It was not enough to declare, along with Sallust, that Roman society was then corrupt; it was necessary to affirm even as Augustine did, in the words of Cicero, that, as a society, Rome had totally ceased to exist.[63]

But, was that going far enough? If we recall the thesis already maintained by Augustine,[64] namely, that the republic of Rome had prospered because of its virtues, it would seem quite possible to grant that it was a society worthy of the name. The reason was, as St. Augustine had written to Marcellinus in 412, that God wished to make manifest the supernatural ideal of the Christian virtues, by permitting ancient Rome to prosper without them. He thereby granted a certain temporal efficacy to the civic virtues of the pagans, and to Rome itself the character of an authentic society. Certainly, Augustine would never completely deny it. For certain reasons, whether divine or human, ancient Rome was, in its own way, a true society. The republic was certainly much better administered by the more ancient Romans than by their successors; but, in the final

63 *The City of God* 2.21. St. Augustine somewhat forces the text of Cicero which he quotes.
64 Cf. pp. xlii-xliv, above.

analysis, and in its own way, it was a society. However, in the very context where Augustine made this admission,[65] he added that it was not a society; this fact he proves later, using as his authority the difinitions of the social body already proposed by Cicero. There had never been a true Roman society, because true justice had never reigned in Rome. There, we are clearly facing a problem which cannot be resolved simply. In a sense, there was a Roman Republic, especially when, at its origin, there did reign a kind of justice which in turn gave birth to a kind of society. However, since that justice was not a true justice, the society it engendered was not a true society. Here, for the moment, let us yield to the exigencies of logic and admit that there never has been a Roman society, because there has never been a true society; for, not to be a true society is to be no society at all.

Taken in its strict meaning, this thesis implies that there exists and can exist but a single city worthy of the name, one which is truly a city, because it observes the laws of

65 *The City of God* 2.21: Rome 'never was a republic, because true justice never had a place in it. . . . But, accepting the more probable definition of a republic, I admit there was a republic of a kind, and certainly much better administered by the more ancient Romans than their successors. But true justice exists only in that republic whose founder and ruler is Christ; if anyone sees fit to call this a republic, since we cannot deny that it is a commonweal. If, however, this name which has become a commonplace in other contexts is considered foreign to our way of speaking, we can certainly assert that there is true justice in the City about which Sacred Scripture says: *Glorious things are said of Thee, O City of God'* (*Ps.* 86.3). This eloquent text settles several points. First, the body of men in submission to Christ forms a people; it could be called a republic of Christians. The term "republic" had already been appropriated to Rome; hence, it could be called a city. The term City of God was borrowed from Scripture. However, we can still agree with H. Scholz, *op. cit.* 78, that the notion of two opposed cities was suggested to St. Augustine by Ticonius: *'Ecce duas civitates, unam Dei et unam diaboli.'*

true justice; in short, the City whose head is Christ. Doubtless, there ought to be a second at least, namely, one which is constituted by all men, whose head is not Christ. But this latter is scarcely more than the castoffs of the former, and exists because of that former. There could be no city of injustice if there were no City of true justice. Every society worthy of the name is, therefore, either the City of God or defined in relation to the City of God. That such is the absolute position of St. Augustine is undeniable and can be substantiated by more than one proof.

However, the Roman virtues and the civic grandeur of the Roman order raised problems for St. Augustine and, for better or for worse, he had to take them into consideration. The reason for this was the ambiguity of the notion of justice. For, if the notion of true justice is clear, that of false justice is not; and, so long as it is not known whether the justice in question is a justice, it cannot be known whether the society founded upon it is a society. That is doubtless why St. Augustine, when examining the problem later on, was led to a new definition of the social bond, wherein the notion of justice was placed in the background, although not entirely eliminated from the discussion. That fact has been the object of regret, but the reason for the regret is not obvious.[66]

In any case, it is necessary, first of all, to understand why St. Augustine was led to make a new definition. Identification of the social bond with justice raised a twofold difficulty: first, that raised in the case of Rome, from which we have just seen how he escaped; second, that with regard to

66 A. J. Carlyle, 'St. Augustine and the City of God,' in F.J.C. Hearnshaw, *The Social and Political Ideas of Some Great Mediaeval Thinkers* (London 1923) 42-52.

the city which is not the City of God, a difficulty from which, as we shall soon see, St. Augustine cannot really escape if the social bond is a true justice. How could there be two cities in a doctrine which teaches that, since every city is founded on justice, there can be only the one City of Christ, which is founded on the justice of Christ?

St. Augustine's dialectical procedure begins with the definition of a people, taken from Cicero's now lost dialogue *On the Republic*. 'A people,' Scipio is made to say, 'is a multitude united by the recognition of a law and a community of interests.'[67] To submit to the law is to submit to justice; for, if there is no law (*jus*), how can there be justice (*justitia*)? What is done with justice is done justly. Likewise, it would not be possible to grant the title of just to the iniquitous decisions handed down by men with no regard for justice. In accordance with the principles laid down by Scipio and Cicero, it follows that a multitude, not united by justice, does not form a people. But, if there is no people, there can be no *res populi*, that is, no *res publica*, or, to use a modern term, no republic. What is justice, if not the virtue which renders to everyone what is his due? And what is this justice of men which tears man away from God in order to make him subject to the demons? Is that rendering to everyone his due? Yet, the Roman gods were nothing but demons; under the guise of innumerable idols it was certainly the impure spirits which were adored.[68] Hence, we must either refrain from affirming that the Romans ever were a people—which would be somewhat difficult—or we must define a people in

67 *Populum esse definivit coetum multitudinis, juris consensu et utilitatis communione sociatum* (*The City of God* 19.21).

68 *Ibid.*

some way other than in relation to justice. This is what St. Augustine eventually did.[69]

After once more recalling that, if the Ciceronian definition is true, then where there is no justice there can be no people,[70] St. Augustine proposed a quite different definition: A people is an association of rational beings united by a unanimous agreement upon those things which they love.[71] It is not difficult to see what society Augustine had in mind when

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69 In speaking of the new definition which we are about to examine, Carlyle (p. 50) writes: 'Now I am by no means clear myself whether the phrases of St. Augustine in this place represent a settled conviction or a merely casual and isolated judgment. Many of the other references which he makes to the State, while they correspond in some measure with this definition, are ambiguous, though they would seem to indicate a persistence in leaving out the moral or ethical conception of the State. If this omission of St. Augustine's had been carefully considered by him, and if it was deliberate and persistent, it would represent a conception of the nature of political society of the gravest significance, for it would mean that perhaps the most influential of all Christian teachers desired to eliminate the conception of justice from the theory of the nature of the State . . . I am myself, therefore, not at all certain whether St. Augustine did deliberately attempt to change the conception of the State. If he did, I cannot but feel that it was a deplorable error for a great Christian teacher.

'Happily the matter is not important, for if indeed he did not make this mistake it had no significance in the history of Christian ideas. It is a notable fact that this passage of St. Augustine is hardly ever quoted at all in later Christian writers.'

This last fact seems to be correct; however, the first part is far from it. St. Augustine eliminated the notion of justice from the definition of a people, because there can be a people without justice. That is precisely why he changed the Ciceronian definition of a people. But he never intended to free any people from a respect for justice. Besides, it is very doubtful whether the new Augustinian definition of a people was without influence on the history of ideas. One of the objects of the present introduction is to prove the contrary.

70 This is tantamount to saying that there can be but one people, the people of the City of God; cf. *The City of God* 19.23.

71 *Populus est coetus multitudinis rationalis, rerum quos diligit concordi ratione sociatus* (*The City of God* 19.24.)

he attempted to give a definition which should include all societies. If we are interested in determining what association of rational beings is especially founded on a common love of the same thing, whither should we turn, if not to the Church of Christ? Certainly, the Church is founded on the divine Authority, which is the guarantee of her teaching office; the faith upon which she is founded, however, is not for a moment divorced from charity, which is the bond of union. At her very origin stands charity, and it is this charity which holds together that people which is united in the common love of the good, whose pledge is the faith. Jesus Christ Himself bade His disciples to love God and to love each other as He loved them and as they loved Him. In His teaching, the two Commandments of the Law become the 'great commandments' and so obtain a completely new force, for they will henceforth contain the whole Law and the Prophets. It is a wholly new people to which Christ is addressing Himself when He speaks thus to His disciples. The mutual love to which He binds them and which He bestows upon them is, precisely, the sign by which, from then on, the world would recognize Christians.[72]

It is necessary to recall at this point the prayer of Jesus to His Father, not only for His disciples, but also for His disciples' disciples till the consummation of the world: 'It is not only for them that I pray; I pray for those who are to find faith in me through their word; that they may all be one; that they too may be one in us, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee; so that the world may come to believe that it is thou who hast sent me. And I have given them the privilege which thou gavest to me, that they should all be one, as we are one; that while thou art in me, I may be in

72 Matt. 5.43-48; 19.19; 22.34-40; Mark 12.29-31; Luke 6.27-36.

them, and so they may be perfectly made one. So let the world know that it is thou who hast sent me, and that thou hast bestowed thy love upon them, as thou hast bestowed it upon me. This, Father, is my desire, that all those whom thou hast entrusted to me may be with me where I am, so as to see my glory, thy gift made to me, in that love which thou didst bestow upon me before the foundation of the world. Father, thou art just; the world has never acknowledged thee, but I have acknowledged thee, and these men have acknowledged that thou didst send me. I have revealed, and will reveal, thy name to them; so that the love thou hast bestowed upon me may dwell in them, and I, too, may dwell in them'[73]

Thus was born a new human family, that of those predestined to be the adopted sons of the Father in Jesus Christ.[74] In this family, as we have already said: 'there is no more Gentile and Jew, no more circumcised and uncircumcised; no one is barbarian or Scythian, no one is slave or free; there is nothing but Christ in any of us.'[75] Finally, that is why the Christians are members of the same body, whose head is Christ,[76] in which all are 'eager to preserve,' in a mutual charity, 'that unity the Spirit gives you, whose bond is peace.'[77]

We would search the Scriptures in vain for an abstract definition of a people. However, the New Testament gives us a glimpse of the beginnings of the one whose essence St. Augustine has just defined as the union of men who are united by a common love of the same good. This definition

73 John 27.20-26.
74 Eph. 1.5.
75 Col. 3.11.
76 1 Cor. 12.17; Eph. 7.22ff.; 4.15ff.; Col. 2.19; Rom. 12.4.
77 Eph. 4.3.

of a society is purely religious and, as we shall see, even mystical; this formula does not reveal itself as immediately applicable to every kind of society, and above all to the Roman Empire. The question whether a society is good or bad is no longer identical with the question whether a certain group of men constitutes a people. The formula of Cicero, interpreted by a Christian, holds in the case of a single people, that is, the Christian people, which possesses the only true justice, namely, the justice of Christ. The new formula, on the contrary, makes it possible to admit that peoples are worthy of the name of people, even though they are unjust. 'Whatever be the object of its love, if the assemblage is composed of rational creatures, not beasts, and provided it is united by a unanimous agreement, it is not absurd to say that the better the love, the better the people, the lower the love, the lower the people. According to this definition, which is our own, the Roman people is a people and the Roman weal [*res ejus*] is a common weal [*res publica*].' Thus, in spite of their political decadence, brought about by the condition of morals, the name of people cannot be denied them, so long as there exists any kind of assemblage of rational beings, united by the unanimous agreement of all its members upon those things which they love. 'And,' St. Augustine adds, 'what I have said of this people and this commonweal is to be understood as applicable to the Athenians and all the Greeks, to the Egyptians, and the Assyrians of Babylon, and thus to each and every commonwealth, whether its dominions be great or small. If, generally speaking, there is a city of the impious, it certainly does not possess justice, yet it is, nonetheless, a City.'[78]

78 *The City of God* 19.24.

From among the innumerable cities throughout the world, only two are of interest to St. Augustine: two cities, that is, two societies of men.[79] Since the individual is to the city as the letters of the alphabet to the word, we must seek the origin of the two societies, into which men are divided, by examining the component parts of the societies themselves. There was a moment in history when the unity of mankind was perfectly realized, that is, when it was composed of a single man. In fact, it was precisely to secure this unity that God first created a single man, from whom all others are sprung. In itself, this was not necessary; the earth could be peopled today with the descendants of several men, simultaneously created at the beginning of time, to whose stock each and every one would belong. Even so, the unification of mankind would still be both desirable and possible; but, through the one ancestor, from whom all men are sprung, this unity is not only a realizable ideal, it is a fact. It is a physical fact, since all men are related. Likewise, it is a moral fact, for, instead of considering themselves bound together by a mere likeness of nature, men are conscious of a real family bond. None of the faithful could doubt that all men, regardless of race, color or appearance, have their origin in the first man created by God, and that this first man was alone of his kind.[80] There was no doubt in St. Augustine's mind that God

79 *The City of God* 15.1; cf. above, n. 2.

80 The anti-racism of St. Augustine embraces all men whatsoever their state, even the pygmies, if there are such creatures; St. Augustine was not sure if there were. He even included the Sciopodes, who shelter themselves from the sun in the shade of one foot, and the Cynocephali, who had dogs' heads and barked. Whoever is rational and mortal, regardless of color or shape or sound of voice, is certainly of the stock of Adam. None of the faithful (*nullus fidelium*) is to doubt that all the above originated from the first creation. God knew how to beautify the universe through the diversity of its parts. Cf. *The City of God* 16.8.

Himself had created the human race in this way so that men might understand how pleasing unity, even in diversity, was to God;[81] nor could they doubt that their unity was a family unity.[82] Thus, men are naturally brothers in Adam even before being supernaturally brothers in Christ; of this we are assured by faith.[83]

Nevertheless, two kinds of men appear at the very dawn of human history: Cain and Abel. They were reasonable beings, born of the same father, from whom their own mother also came forth. They were both equally men, but of two radically different wills, in which there is portrayed the possibility, at least, of two radically distinct societies. Accordingly, as men follow the example of Cain or Abel, they place themselves within the ranks of one or the other of two peoples: of which one loves the good; the other, evil. The first has as its founder Abel; the second, Cain.[84] From this

81 *The City of God* 12.22.

82 'God, therefore, created one single man, not, of course, that he was to be deprived of all human society, but rather that in this way the unity of society and the bond of concord might be more strongly commended to him if they were joined together, not only through a likeness of nature, but also by a family affection.' (*The City of God* 12.22.)

83 The fact that there is a natural unity in the human race is known only by faith; Christians believe that God created a single man and took from him the first woman, and that from this first couple all humanity is sprung. The Creator could have done otherwise. If He acted thus, it was precisely that the elect might be fully aware of their unity. The unity of the human race is a model and figure of the unity of the holy people called to adoption through Jesus Christ. This whole outlook is based upon the faith. Cf. *The City of God* 12.22.

84 *Enarrationes in psalmos* 142.3: '*Antiqua ergo ista civitas Dei, semper tolerans terram, sperans coelum, quae etiam Jerusalem vocatur et Sion.*' Cain was the first-born of the parents of the human race; he belonged to the city of men. Then came Abel, who belonged to the City of God. Cf. *The City of God* 15.1. To be noted here is the fact that the term "city of men" does not signify the state or nation, but the people of men whose end is not God. This is evident, since, as men, Cain and Abel were in no way different.

beginning the history of the two peoples is identified with universal history; rather, it is universal history. St. Augustine has reviewed the highlights of this history; others after him have repeated and enlarged it. It is not our purpose to follow in the same path, but to examine how Augustine himself envisaged the two societies of which he speaks, and which we have to define.

We said that societies are divided according to the division of loves. When St. Augustine speaks of a 'City,' it is in a figurative sense, or, as he himself states, a mystical sense, that he does so; and it is in this sense that the term must be understood. There is, on the one hand, the society or city of all men, who, loving God in Christ, are predestined to reign eternally with God. On the other hand, there is the city of all those men who do not love God, and who are to suffer eternal punishment along with the demons. St. Augustine has, therefore, never conceived the idea of a single universal society, but of two, both of which are universal—at least in the sense that every man whatsoever is necessarily a citizen of one or the other.[85] In this sense, it is true to say that two loves have produced two cities: one, in which the love of God unites all men; a second, wherein all citizens, regardless of time and place, are united by their love of the world. Augustine has differentiated the two societies in several ways: love of God or love of the world; love of God to the point of self-contempt or love of self carried to a contempt of God; love of the flesh or love of the spirit. In every case, however, they are distinguished by love, which is their very root. Yet, by whatever name they are designated, it is still true to say

85 There is but one human race divided into two peoples. Cf. *De vera religione* 50; *The City of God* 15.1; also, below, n. 91.

that two loves have produced two cities.[86] While *The City of God* was still a project, and long before he wrote its history, it was thus that St. Augustine conceived of it. After he had distinguished between a distorted love of self and holy charity, he immediately added: 'These are two loves, the one of which is holy, the other, unholy; one social, the other individualist; one takes heed of the common utility because of the heavenly society, the other reduces even the commonweal to its own ends because of a proud lust of domination; the one is subject to God, the other sets itself up as a rival to God; the one is serene, the other tempestuous; the one peaceful, the other quarrelsome; the one prefers truthfulness to deceitful praises, the other is utterly avid of praise; the one is friendly, the other jealous; the one desires for its neighbor what it would for itself, the other is desirous of lording it over its neighbor; the one directs its effort to the neighbor's good, the other to its own.

'These two loves were manifested in the angels before they were manifested in men: one, in the good angels; the other, in the bad. These two loves have created the distinction between the two cities, the one the City of the just, the other the city of the wicked. Established among men in accordance with the wonderful and ineffable providence of God which governs and orders all His creatures, and mingled together, they live out their life upon this earth, until separated at the last judgment: the one, in union with the good angels, to enjoy eternal life in its King; the other, in company with the bad angels, to be cast along with its king into everlasting fire.[87] In this historical sketch of the two loves, there is con-

86 *Enarr. in ps.* 64,2. *City of God* 14.1 and 27; 15.1. *Duas civitates faciunt duo amores; fecerunt civitates duas amores duo.*
87 *De genesi ad litteram* 11.15.

tained universal history itself, as well as the basis of its intelligibility. Tell me what a people loves and I shall tell you what it is.'[88]

What, exactly, are these two cities? They are, as we have said, two peoples whose nature is determined by the object of their love. The term 'city' is already a symbolic mode of designation, but there are terms still more symbolical: Jerusalem, that is, vision of peace; and Babylon, that is, Babel or confusion.[89] No matter the name, it is always the same thing referred to, namely, two human societies.[90]

To examine the notion still more closely, the surest method is to describe the members of which these two societies are composed. This St. Augustine has done in so many ways that the reader's hesitations on the point are quite excusable, as are some of his interpreters who have become lost in their task. However, there is a guiding thread which leads us securely through the labyrinth of texts. It is the principle, several times enunciated by St. Augustine, that the two cities of which he speaks recruit their citizens in accordance with

88 *The City of God* 19.24.

89 Every kind of society, however numerous and diversified, is reducible to two. St. Augustine has derived the term 'city' from Sacred Scripture. He does not quote the texts, but he has already given an indication; cf. above, n. 5; also, *Ps.* 47.2,3,9; 45.5-6. H. Scholz, *op. cit.* 71, n.1, gives other references to the New Testament (The last reference he gives should read *Apoc.* 21.2). Cf. Scholz (pp. 71-81) for a fruitful discussion of the notion anterior to St. Augustine. The texts borrowed from Ticonius are particularly important (pp. 78-81). Ticonius had already spoken of Babylon as the City of the Impious, and Jerusalem as the Church of the living God. Jerusalem means 'vision of peace'; Babylon, as Babel, means confusion. Cf. *The City of God* 16.4; 18.2; 19.9.

90 St. Augustine remains faithful to the Greco-Roman tradition regarding city and people. He distinguishes three organic forms of social life (*vita socialis*), the family, the city, the globe. Cf. *The City of God* 19.7. Scholz is correct in pointing out (pp. 85-6) that it is generally quite wrong to translate *civitas* as 'state,' even though in a few rare cases it would be correct.

the law of the divine 'predestination' alone. All men are partisans of one or the other society because they are predestined to beatitude with God, or to eternal despair with the Devil.[91] Since there is no conceivable alternative, it is possible to assert without fear of error that the quality of the citizen of one or the other society depends, in the final analysis, on the divine predestination, whose object every man is.

It is in this sense that we must interpret the terms used by St. Augustine to designate the two cities. Some of the terms offer no difficulty, as, for example, the City of God, or of Christ and the city of the Devil;[92] or, the family of men who live by faith and the family of men who do not live by faith; the body of the faithful and the body of the unfaithful; the society of religious men and the society of the irreligious, that is, of those whom love of God unites and those united through love of self.[93] On the other hand, doubts arise when St. Augustine contrasts the earthly city and heavenly City, the temporal city and the eternal City, or even the mortal city and immortal society.[94] Both cities are in fact immortal; the predestined who live in time are, nevertheless, members of one of two eternal cities, and even on this earth it is possible to be a member of the heavenly City by the very fact of being predestined to it.[95] Sometimes, St. Augustine uses formulae

91 *Quas etiam mystice appellamus civitates duas* (*The City of God* 15.1).

92 St. Augustine speaks several times of a City of God and a city of the Devil. Christ is King in the first; the Devil, in the second. He also calls the City of God the *libera civitas*. Cf. *The City of God* 17.20; 21.1.

93 *The City of God* 19.17.

94 *The City of God* 11.1. Also to be noted is the statement that 'There is a City of God whose citizens we long to be with a love breathed into us by its Creator.' Cf. also, *The City of God* 5.18; 21.11.

95 St. Augustine often and in exact terms presents the two cities as intermingled in this life. There is a part of the City of God which lives on earth by faith during its heavenly pilgrimage. Cf. *The City of God* 19.17; 22.6.

which are precise; sometimes, not. In case of doubt, the first should serve as a rule of interpretation of the second. Every city, regardless of how it is called, is reducible to that whose King is God, or to that wherein the Devil reigns. The different terms of designation never signify other than that.

The unfortunately frequent absurdity of identifying the city of the Devil with civil societies as such, or, as is sometimes said, the State, should be avoided. The two, in fact, may happen to be identical, that is, in some given historical instance; but, of themselves, they are always distinguishable. For example, Roman society of the decadence, with all the vices which its poets, historians and moralists attributed to it, was nothing more than a fragment of the city of the Devil, a wayfarer on this earth en route to the evil end which awaited it. Even after the advent of Christ, inasmuch as such a society was to endure, what was there to do except bear with it patiently and predict for it its final outcome? The servants of God are commanded to forebear, if necessary, with this wicked and most shameful republic, whether they be kings, princes, judges, civil or military officials, rich or poor, bond or free, male or female, in order to procure, by this forbearance, a place of glory for themselves in the most holy and august court of the angels, the heavenly Republic, where the will of God is the law.[96] There can be no possible doubt that the earthly republic which St. Augustine condemns, is Rome; and the one which he holds up in opposition to it is surely the City of God, in which alone justice reigns, because its founder and head is Christ.[97] Elsewhere, in speaking of the men who are 'citizens of the

96 *The City of God* 2.19.
97 *The City of God* 2.21.

earthly republic,'[98] St. Augustine is certainly thinking of the members of a people or of a State. However, in every case it is neither the people nor the State which are condemned as such; rather, they are condemned because they define their end as on this earth and incorporate themselves into the city of the Devil, whose law they accept. They are evil only insofar as they aim at being exclusively of the earth; this is enough to exclude them from the City of God.

The true definition of the earthly city is, therefore, entirely different.[99] It is not a question of determining whether a man lives or does not live in one of the societies into which the world is actually and inevitably divided, but whether he himself defines his last end as on earth or in heaven. In the first case, he is a citizen of the earthly city; in the second, of the heavenly City. There is no change in the aspects of the problem whether it be raised in relation to societies themselves or in relation to individuals. Those which are organized toward the attainment of no more than earthly happiness are for that very reason incorporated into the earthly city, namely, the city of the Devil; those which are organized toward the attainment of heavenly happiness are incorporated thereby into the heavenly City, namely, the City of God. The exact meaning of the earthly city is, therefore, the city of the sons of the earth, that is, of the society whose members, bound as they are by their exclusive and preponderant love of the things of this world, consider the earth as their unique and true City.

But, whether it is a question of either earth or Heaven, what end do these cities pursue? When St. Augustine fully

98 *The City of God* 22.6.

99 Cf., on this point, H. Scholz, *op. cit.* 87-9; also, Otto Schilling, *Die Staats- und Soziallehre des hl. Augustinus* (Freiburg i Breisgau 1910) 54.

develops his thought on this question, he points out that every social group sets as its objective the attainment of peace. However, it is possible to conceive of and desire two distinct kinds of peace, that of earth or that of Heaven. Nothing prevents us from desiring both together, but there is a radical difference between those who exclusively pursue earthly peace and those who in addition desire a heavenly peace. Once again, we come back to the distinction of the societies according to their dominant wills. Every will which tends toward the peace of God characterizes the people of the City of God; every will which tends toward the peace of this world as the final end characterizes the people of the earthly city. The first will unites all those who make use of the world to possess God; the second will unites all those who, whether they acknowledge one God or several, aim at using God or the gods to possess the world.[100] 'Tell me what a people loves and I shall tell you what it is.' If it is legitimate to identify a specified people with the earthly city, it is only to the degree that it has already incorporated itself through its prevailing will into that city. It does not incorporate itself into the earthly city because it exists in time, which its condition as a creature demands, but by its refusal to make use of time to possess eternity.

Just as human society as such is not identified with the earthly city, so the Church is not identified with the City of God. The City of God, as we have seen, includes all those predestined to heavenly happiness, and only those. This, however, is not the case with the Church. No matter how strictly we conceive of the Church, there can still be men who will one day enjoy the vision of God, but who do not, as yet, belong

100 *The City of God* 15.7; 4.34; 15.15; 19.17.

to the Church. St. Paul before his conversion is a typical example: he was not in the Church of Christ, but he was a predestined citizen of the City of God. On the other hand, there are within the Church Christians who are not destined to heavenly happiness; these are members of the Church, but they are not citizens of the City of God. Nevertheless, just as certain peoples are incorporated into the earthly city because of their prevailing will, so the Church is, in fact and by right in the very essence of her will, the incarnation of the City of God.

That is why St. Augustine is perfectly correct when he says that here below the two cities are enmeshed, that is, 'interlocked and fused' together. The expression is to be taken in the strict sense; for, if the ideas of the cities are irreducibly distinct to the point of mutual exclusion, their citizens are not distinct while they are wayfarers in time as they are bound to be. While St. Paul was persecuting the Christians, although predestined to the City of God, he still mingled with the people of the earthly city. The City of God numbers some of its future citizens even among its enemies, just as during its earthly pilgrimage it bears within its bosom men united to it by communion in the sacraments, but who do not share the eternal destiny of the saints. Enmeshed for the present, the Last Judgment will separate them.[101] But, the members of the Church who will not enjoy the beatitude of heaven are those who, although in the Church, do not live according to the Church. That is why the confusion, which can happen between the members in time, does not alter the purity of her essence. Those whose love aspires after the goods of this world, even though they are members of the Church, are citizens

101 *The City of God* 1.35.

of the earthly city; the Church, however, never ceases to aspire after the goods of the heavenly City. In this respect, the Church as such is already identified with the City of God,[102] because, just as those who live in the world according to the world are already members of the earthly city, so those who live in the Church according to the Church are already reigning with Christ in the Kingdom of Christ.[103]

Thus conceived, the City of God has defined boundaries, although they are wholly spiritual, for they coincide with the limits set by faith. Since the City of God is the Kingdom of Christ, it is vivified from within by the faith of Christ from which it has its life. It embraces all men who themselves live by this faith, for, Christ reigns wherever faith reigns, and, where Christ reigns, there also is the Kingdom of Christ. This point is of extreme importance. Henceforth, this new society will find itself constituted by the agreement of wills, unified in the love of the same good proposed to them by the same faith. The agreement of hearts presupposes an agreement of minds; that is why the bond of the holy society is a doctrine as well as a love: the love is a love of truth, a truth which can be but a single truth, that of Christ. St. Augustine has felt this point so deeply that he deduced from it a complete doctrine on the essential difference between the attitude of the world and that of the Church toward truth itself. He has, at times, emphasized this opposition to the extent of conceiving it as an opposition between the Church and the State.

Since the opposition in question can be only accidental

102 Several times St. Augustine identifies the Church with the City of God, and also with the Kingdom of Christ. Cf. *The City of God* 8.24; 13.15; 16.2; 20.9.

103 On this earth, men belong to the City and the Kingdom of Christ. Of those whose conversation is in heaven (Phil. 3.20), it can be said that they reign in His Kingdom; thus, that they are His Kingdom. Cf. *The City of God* 20.9.

to the essence of states, let us set it aside and consider, first of all, the two cities in themselves. The most striking feature which distinguishes, in this regard, the earthly city from the City of God is its agnosticism. The earthly city does not imply the recognition of any truth common to all of its members, whereas the City of God requires a single truth, whose acceptance is the guarantee of its unity and of its very existence.

The ancient philosophies promised happiness to man. They pointed out the route to it, but there were no two philosophers of any note in agreement on either the nature of happiness or the path which would lead to it. The reasons for disagreement were many: one, for example, is vanity, which strives for originality at any cost, as well as for superiority in wisdom. However, the principal reason is much deeper: because they were men, these philosophers sought happiness as men, that is, with human feelings and reasonings. In order to find the truth and to agree upon it, there was needed the support of a divine revelation both sure and common to all. Consequently, the sacred authors proceeded in a completely different way. Small in numbers, they all announced the same message, and this unity of opinion was responsible for their tremendous following. Thus, on one side there was a great number of different philosophers, each one of whom had but few followers; on the other there was a small number of sacred writers, all of whom were in agreement and had a great number of disciples.

That, fundamentally, explains why the attitude of the State toward philosophy is not the same as that of the Church. With a pagan people, the State remains indifferent to the teachers of wisdom. The experience of history is decisive on this point: never in the history of the earthly city has the State so resolutely become the patron of any doctrine to the extent

of condemning all others. 'What leader of any philosophic sect whatsoever has ever been approved in the city of the Devil, to the extent of disapproving him who either thought differently or contrariwise?' When he wrote these lines, St. Augustine had particularly in mind the history of Athens, where Epicureanism, which denied a divine providence, and Stoicism, which held for a divine providence, were taught simultaneously. It was, however, important for human happiness to know which was right and which wrong. Antisthenes placed the sovereign good in pleasure; Aristippus, in virtue. One asserted that the philosopher ought to flee from public offices; the other, that one should strive after power. Let us also take into consideration other points of doctrine no less important: Is the soul mortal or immortal? Is there or is there not a transmigration of souls? There are contradictions at every turn. Has the State ever intervened for the sake of agreement? Never! What people, what senate, what public authority, what public power of the city of impiety has ever taken the trouble to settle the philosophical dissensions and the almost innumerable disputes that could be cited? When have we ever seen one doctrine approved and authorized, while others were disapproved and proscribed? Rather, have we not seen the earthly city make no attempt at order, but, on the contrary, tolerate confusedly in its bosom every kind of controversy which places men at odds, not about houses and fields and financial problems, but about the very sources of happiness and unhappiness in life? Indeed, the pagan state is a veritable Babylon; it is a city of confusion, and of the worst kind of confusion, since it authorizes every sort of error and has no interest in the truth. This is easily foreseeable, for the earthly city has as its king the Devil, and what concern is it of such a king if the most contradictory errors op-

pose each other in combat? However diverse these impieties be, they all perform the Devil's work; it is enough that they be false to guarantee his power.

St. Augustine, of course, did not foresee the official philosophy of the Marxist State, which is to the City of the Devil what the Church is to the City of God. The Marxist State, however, is perhaps nothing more than a belated realization of a necessity inherent in the very notion of a universal society. From the moment the earthly city aspires after universality, which is primarily attributed to the City of God, it becomes necessary for it, in turn, to promulgate a single dogma and to assign to all men one and the same earthly good, whose love, common to all men, will make of them a single people and a single city.

The intellectual order of the City of God, quite contrary to that of the ancient city, prefigures rather that of the modern city. If we compare the people of Israel with the Greek cities, it is clear that, from the very beginning, the holy people never knew such an indifference. This people immediately distinguished between true and false prophets, and the perfect agreement between the sacred authors was always taken as an unmistakable mark of truth. 'It was they who were the philosophers of the day, that is, the lovers of wisdom; they were the sages, the theologians, the prophets and masters of uprightness and piety. Whoever thought and lived as they did not either think or live according to the standards of men, but of God who spoke through them.'

What gives coherence and strength to such a teaching is that it is founded on the authority of God. The authority of human reason has proved its weakness by its own defeat. Even the Devil can devise new schemes. Hence, not only did St. Augustine fail to foresee the formation of a people, for

whom the State, proclaiming itself a teacher, would decree, in its turn, a state-truth, but he even doubted that any society whose sole end is this world could be interested in any such problem. This does not mean, however, that philosophy cannot teach, along with considerable error, some of the truths accessible to reason. Long after the first enthusiasm with which the reading of Plotinus had inspired him, St. Augustine still did not forget the truths which the philosophers spoke about God, the Author and Providence of the world, about the excellence of virtue, love of country and trust in friendship. All these truths, and a good many others, were both well known and taught, but intermingled with numberless errors; in addition, there was neither knowledge of the end to which they were referred nor of the manner of their relation to it. At the same time, however, the Prophets taught these selfsame truths, but free of all error, as well as with an authority both undeniable and definitive. The unity of the people of God was due to the very unity of its doctrine.[104]

The Church, the living incarnation of the City of God, did nothing more than maintain the tradition of the Jewish people whose heir she was, and whose doctrine she enriched by adding to the sacred deposit of the Old Testament that of the New. Her catholicity, that is, her universality, obliged her to preserve even more carefully the unity of this doctrine. The diligence with which she endeavored to fulfill her duty gave birth to a phenomenon, quite unknown to the ancients,

104 *The City of God* 18.41-43. An objection could be raised against this thesis, since many differences were introduced into Scripture through the diversity of translations. St. Augustine, however, had no anxieties on this point. He considered even the deviations of translators as inspired by God, so that they were, in a certain sense, prophets. Cf. *The City of God* 18.43. If we realize how much profit St. Augustine gained from some manifestly erroneous translations, we are inclined to agree with him.

namely, heresy. Socrates was put to death for impiety toward the gods, not for any doctrinal error concerning the nature of the gods in general. Provided nothing was said against its own gods, the ancient city could tolerate every kind of theology. The City of God, however, could tolerate but one, namely, the one whose acceptance guaranteed its unity as well as its very existence. Whoever is at variance with this doctrine breaks the bond of the City. This is exactly what heresy does. In choosing its own truth, heresy acts as a destructive force, aroused by the devils, to destroy from within the City of God at the exact moment when, by the grace of God, it was beginning to triumph over its enemies from without. Thence did the Church, the incarnation of the City of God on earth, derive the imperious duty of doctrinal intolerance, an intolerance which was later to assume a properly civic and social aspect during those periods when the City of God, in a sense, absorbed the State, even though this intolerance is essentially required only within the confines of the heavenly City.

That it is required there is most manifest; it is for the heavenly City a question of life and death. The Church could not permit indifferently and without intervening that those who speak in its name hold whatever doctrines they like. The City of God, whose existence is bound to the unity of the faith, cannot allow its teachers the right to attack and contradict her, a right which the City of Confusion indifferently grants to its philosophers. The only thing that could be done in such a case was to intervene authoritatively in order to re-establish unity by calling back those in error to the unity of the faith. A man in error is not a heretic. But, if such a one becomes a heretic by preferring his own interpretations to the doctrine

from which the Church derives her life, there is nothing for her to do except expel him from the body which he is attempting to destroy.[105] Actually, she does not exclude him; she merely declares that he has already excluded himself.

From this are begotten the opposite points of view of the two cities regarding doctrine. On the one hand, there is indifference and tolerance; on the other, dogmatism and an essential intolerance. This Augustinian statement of the problem both describes a constant fact and points to the origin of numberless difficulties. Some of these difficulties were apparent to St. Augustine himself, but a great many still more serious ones were to arise throughout the course of history. Since the City of God is not of this world, it has no obligation of intolerance toward the things of this world; inasmuch as it does not oblige the earthly city to renounce its proper mission, the City of God places no obstacles in the way of any individual or State. Let the Christians therefore think and live as they like: what does it matter so long as they do not oblige others to think as they do? Nevertheless, the City of God could not sanction the earthly city; rather, it must blame, condemn and, if possible, reform the latter. What means did it feel it was authorized to use in such an intervention? Therein lies the whole problem. The solution can vary according to circumstances. However, if we cling to the position of St. Augustine, the spiritual authority of the City of God cannot but intervene to restrain the temporal liberty, which, according to St. Augustine's own description, the earthly city claims as its own. When the spiritual opposition between the two cities

105 *The City of God* 18.51. On the problems raised by recourse to the secular power, cf. J. F. Nourrisson, *La Philosophie de Saint Augustin* (Paris 1869) II 65-73. The evolution of Augustine's doctrine on this point is well treated in A. Combès, *La Doctrine Politique de S. Augustin* (Paris 1927) 352-409.

unfolds in time, it inevitably degenerates into conflict, and, although St. Augustine does not seem to have foreseen it, it is not impossible to imagine an earthly city with a unity modeled upon and organized against the heavenly City, possessed of its own doctrinal authority, excluding every kind of heresy and intolerant of all contradiction.

When the Bishop of Hippo wrote *The City of God,* there were no indications that anything such as has just been described would happen. Among the Greeks, there were two hundred and eighty-eight different moral sects for the public to choose from. Even if the definitions of the sovereign good were reduced to three, as was done by Varro, there still remains a choice, but a choice which was quite unacceptable to a Christian. If he wanted to know what constituted the sovereign good, the Christian turned to Revelation. There, he learned what eternal life is, and he accepted it on faith.[106] Thereafter, everything is settled in the same way for all those who accept the faith. The present life, into which the Christian is placed by birth, is for him nothing more than a time of tribulations which he will face in each of the three grades of the social order to which he must belong: his family full of anxieties, his country full of injustice, the world full of many disorders—such as those which attend wars between states or those which follow from the diversity of tongues which leads a man to prefer the companionship of his dog to that of a foreigner whose language he does not understand.[107]

Where shall we find a society worthy of the name and sufficiently one to grant us peace? Shall it be the family? the city? the earth? Shall it be, for instance, the unification

106 *The City of God* 19.4.
107 *The City of God* 19.5-6.

of the world under one empire? That has been tried and the failure is manifest. It is naive to think that the unification of the world would suppress wars. In this, it is difficult to see any progress.[108] Wherever we turn, this earth offers no refuge for peace outside the Christian hope of a peace which finds its fulfilment, not on this earth, but in the beatitude of heaven.[109] That is the reason why Christians, even though still in this world, are already living in the next. They already share in its peace, but they can do so only by participating in the order from which all peace is derived. This order itself presupposes the knowledge of the truth, which one day the vision of God will bestow, a knowledge which is already sufficiently assured in this life through faith alone. At any rate, it does assure it. That is exactly what St. Augustine says in one of those celebrated formulae of his wherein is contained the sum total of his doctrine: 'In order that the human mind, haunted by the desire of knowledge, might not lapse into the misery of error because of its weakness, there is necessary a divine teaching authority which it can in security obey; there is also necessary the grace of God that we may fully obey.' Grace does not destroy liberty; rather, it is the cornerstone of liberty. Thus, in this land of exile, where the mortal body hides from man the vision of God, faith alone is the guide.[110] And, since the whole human race is but one man en route toward God, just as faith alone guarantees unity and peace in the heart of man and in the bosom of each family, people and empire, so also, and still more evidently, is it alone able to guarantee the peace of the City of God. 'The peace of the heavenly City is the ordered and harmonious society of those

108 *The City of God* 19.7.
109 *The City of God* 19.11.
110 *The City of God* 19.14.

enjoying God and enjoying one another in God.'[111] This order and harmony, however, is due to the submission to and the acceptance of the eternal Law, brought about here below through faith.[112]

It is impossible to read St. Augustine without being impressed by the great importance of his doctrine or without frequently hesitating over its interpretation. There are so many things which arise in his works that we are afraid of attributing to him what is not contained in these writings, except in a preparatory way; and at the same time we hesitate to deny him what is contained herein, at least in germ, since it found its origin there. We should like to be able to distinguish with certitude those consequences of his principles, of which he was aware, from those which he did not and could not foresee. But, can we? St. Augustine himself hesitated and changed the application of his ideas to suit changing circumstances; but the consequences of which he was aware are few in number compared to the immense succession of circumstances which he did not foresee and which did not happen until after his time throughout the course of a fifteen-century-long history. It is not easy now to know how St. Augustine himself applied his principles to the diverse and changing conditions of his own day; and to know how he would have applied these principles to other conditions is quite impossible. However, it is possible to define at least the spirit of his doctrine and to outline its guiding features.

The two cities are alike contained in a single universe whose head is its Creator, God. Contrary to the Stoics, however, St. Augustine did not conceive of the universe as a city. Never did he speak of the *cosmos* as the City of God in

111 *The City of God* 19.13.
112 *The City of God* 19.14.

the same sense as a Stoic could speak of it as the City of Zeus. For Augustine, a society can exist only among beings endowed with reason. That is why we have seen him posit the universe as the stage on which the history of societies unfolds; and if on more than one point the universe is affected by this history, it is not precisely its own proper history. In this sense, Augustine profoundly differs from the Stoics. When he speaks of a city, he has in mind not an order of things but a veritable society.

If we take into consideration the sum total of rational beings, including the angels, all appear to be subject to the same history, which was prepared from all eternity in the depths of the divine Providence and which began with the creation of the world and of time, and will finish only with the end of the first and the consummation of the second. Augustine, in fact, took up the task of writing a universal history; if he was not the last to do so, he certainly seems to have been the first. In what particularly concerns the nature of man, this project implied the preliminary recognition of the unity of mankind and consequently the unity of its history. That is what he meant when he proposed to treat all men as a single man whose history would be unfolded without interruption from the beginning till the end of time. Although the expression itself is lacking, the notion of a universal history is clearly implied in the work of St. Augustine.

Is the case the same regarding a philosophy of history? Here, it is difficult to reply with a simple yes or no; for the reply implies a certain notion of philosophy. In St. Augustine himself, the presence of a Christian wisdom of history is undeniable, but it is not immediately clear whether, according to him, a universal history would be possible without Revelation, which alone can unveil for us the beginning and the

end of the world. However, it is a fact that, largely because of St. Augustine's influence, the notion of a universal history has, later on, been thought to be possible. And there is certainly nothing contradictory in admitting that all men can be considered as a collective entity whose single history is unfolded in time. Consequently, it is the limits and method of this history which are at stake, not its possibility.

When it is a question of philosophy of history, the problem becomes more complex, for then we must ask whether, from the point of view of St. Augustine himself, history was open to an overall and purely rational, yet true, interpretation, without the light of Revelation. It is certain, however, that St. Augustine never attempted to formulate such a philosophy. His explanation of universal history is essentially religious in the sense that it derives its light from Revelation. He was, therefore, actually a theologian of history. The interpretation which he proposed gets its inspiration less from what we today call philosophy than from what he himself called Wisdom; by that he means the Wisdom which is not only from Christ, but is Christ. Had he been questioned on this point, which no one ever thought of doing, he would have been considerably surprised. But, would he have admitted that reason alone could take from universal history a sense which, within its proper limits, would be both intelligible and true? Since the case did not arise, the question has no historical meaning. And, if there are strong reasons for thinking that he considered that such an attempt would have been ruinous, there is no possibility of proving it.

Must we conclude, therefore, that St. Augustine has no place in the formation of a philosophy of history? This is still another question, quite distinct from the previous two; for, if he did not think about it because the question never oc-

curred to his mind, there is no ground for saying that his work is not at the origin of the problem. On the contrary, everything invites us to believe that the diverse philosophies of history which developed after St. Augustine have been so many attempts to resolve, with the light of natural reason alone, a problem which was first posed by faith alone and which cannot be resolved without the faith. In this sense, the first theologian of history[113] would be the father of all the philosophies of history, even if he had no such intention, and even if they were not recognized for what they are: the ruins of a vaster edifice in which alone they could find a full justification of their own truth, taken in an authentic sense, of which they themselves were quite unaware.

If we admit that St. Augustine proposed this theology and provoked the beginnings of this philosophy, there still remains the question whether his doctrine implied the precise notion of a single universal society. If the answer is yes, then we still must ask: Which society was implied? We have already seen that St. Augustine never spoke of one society, but of two, into which the whole human race is divided. In this sense, his doctrine is at the same time both broader and more restricted than a doctrine of one universal society. It is broader, not only because it includes the angels as well as men, but also because, based upon a revelation which overflows the boundaries of empirical history both past and future, it integrates into the unity of a universal explanation both what man knows and

113 It is a question here of theology in the sense of a speculative doctrine. The entire Old Testament, together with the interpretation which the New Testament gave to it, was already actually a universal history of the known societies treated from the point of view of Revelation. The history of the people of God was a history of the divine plan for all peoples. A sketch of this history can be found in Wisd. 10-19, which narrates how wisdom has directed the people from the creation of Adam. It is already a discourse on universal history.

what the Christian believes concerning his history. It is more restricted, because its very unifying principle prevents it from uniting all men into a single society. By right, such a single and truly universal society should have been possible, for it could have been achieved through the union of all rational creatures in the same love of the same good. Actually, however, there was an immediate break. Since every society is the union of a group of rational creatures in the communion of the same love, the society of those who love God is irreducibly cut off from those who do not love God. Whether a universal earthly society in this world be possible or not, an absolutely universal heavenly society of all men does seem impossible; unless, at least, the fundamental distinction made by St. Augustine between the city of the Devil and the City of God be abolished.

There, it seems, is the first insurmountable obstacle to any attempt to translate in terms of a universal human city the Augustinian notion of the heavenly City. It will come as no surprise that, in our own time, the mystery of Hell haunted and distressed Charles Péguy. His own love, like that of God, could not wish that any man be lost; he never ceased asking himself how God, the Creator of men, could permit that some be damned. If some are lost, then evil is irremediable; and, even if the Church strives with all her powers to achieve the widest possible unity, how are we to atone for past failures and how can we fail to dread those of the future?

The answer probably lies in the very nature of man. To unite all men in view of the next world, the Church has at her disposition in this world only faith. Now, it is not enough that the Cross of Christ was planted on the earth; there is still required that men be willing to look

upon it and that those who have at one time looked upon it do not close their eyes, never to look upon it again. Even when they bear it upon their shoulders, men do not always recognize that it is the Cross which God, after carrying it Himself, gives them to bear. Thus, to look only to the future, what means has the Church—the City of Christ on its way toward God—at her disposition to gather together the whole flock into one fold under one shepherd? In other words, what means does she have to make all men accept the faith of which the Church is the depository and which her love sets before men?

Love is not imposed by force; besides, the Church has no force at her disposal. Jesus Christ Himself had this power, but He chose to delegate it to Caesar. But, perhaps Caesar could be converted and through him, who legitimately wielded this power, the earthly city could be fashioned after the model of the City of God. It is not at all necessary that what is in the world be of the world, that the earthly be of the earth, and that the temporal constantly refuse to see itself as a step toward the eternal. As the faith, which transcends reason, can conquer and give understanding, could not the Church, which transcends all nations and gains its members indiscriminately from every race, country, tongue and state of life, even bestow upon them a completely earthly unity and peace, a unity and peace which they would enjoy immediately on earth, if, as the Church invites them. they were all united by faith in the love of Christ? Thus, at the time, when it posed the faith as the frontier of any universal society, St. Augustine's teaching suggested an ever-increasing effort to push back this frontier to the very limits of the earth. In spite of mishaps, Rome already had Christian emperors and re-

mained Rome. If, perchance, St. Augustine did not clearly conceive of a world united and at peace under a Christian emperor, who would find in the Christian faith itself the foundation of a kind of temporal peace in this world while awaiting the perfect peace of the next, he was not slow in pointing out to sovereigns that such a policy would be a mark of wisdom as well as their duty. With such a beginning, the changing circumstances of history could suggest still more. St. Augustine did not bequeath to his successors an ideal of a universal human city united in view of purely temporal ends proper to it; but it was enough that the City of God exist in order to inspire men with the desire to organize the earth into a single society made to the image and likeness of the heavenly City.

If we examine St. Augustine's own teaching more closely, we shall see why the notion of a temporal human society, endowed with its own unity and including the whole human race, could not present itself to his mind. The two cities which he describes are, as we have seen, mystical, that is, supernatural, in their very essence. The one is the City of truth, of the good, of order, of peace; it is, indeed, a true society. The other, since it is defined as the denial of the former, is the city of error, of evil, of disorder and confusion; it is, in fact, a mockery of a society worthy of the name. Midway between these two cities, of which one is the negation of the other, there is situated a neutral zone where the men of our day hope to construct a third city, which would be temporal like the earthly city, yet just in a temporal way, that is striving toward a temporal justice obtainable by appropriate means. Such an idea seems never to have occurred to St. Augustine; at least, he never spoke of it.

It was not through any failure to foresee the beneficent influence that the City of God, by the very fact of its existence, can and ought to exercise on temporal societies, that the possibility of a unified temporal order, valid and justifiable in itself from the point of view of its proper end, did not suggest itself to St. Augustine; rather, it was due to the close association between the two notions of *world* and of *evil*, so spontaneously linked together in his mind. He neither excluded nor thought about such a possibility. He no more thought of that than of a philosophy which, through the purely rational methods at its disposal, would free itself from the confusion of thought of the ancients and correctly resolve the problems which belonged to its domain. He was prevented from doing so less from principles than from his personal experience, for the reading of Plotinus had sufficiently drawn his attention to the incapacity of unaided natural reason fully to discover truth. Granting Christianity, everything seemed to take place for Augustine as if such a problem no longer existed, and ought nevermore to arise; or, perhaps, as if the transcendent importance of the building of the City of God relegated the temporal order to a place so clearly secondary that it was no longer worth the trouble to consider it for itself or to organize it in view of its own ends.

In pressing this point still further, we finally come to realize both the innermost meaning of *The City of God* and its historical significance.

III

Christian Wisdom and a World Society

The historical significance of *The City of God* can hardly be exaggerated. From the point of view of St. Augustine himself, it was a companion to the *Confessions,* whose final books deal with the history of Creation as told in Holy Writ. With Creation the history of man began; that is, the centuries-old tale of two cities, a tale which will end with the final triumph of the City of God, the ultimate end and true final cause of the divine work of Creation. Seen in the light of Christian wisdom, the evolution of world history is a no less striking 'confession' of the love and power of God than the sight of His creation, and the awareness of the wonders wrought by grace in the soul of His servant Augustine. Here all is of a piece, and no great effort is needed to discover in the *Confessions* the same general purpose as in St. Augustine's monumental *City of God.* The great Bishop of Hippo probably would never have written it except for the fall of Rome and the ensuing controversies to which that event gave rise; nevertheless, when the challenge came he was prepared to meet it.

To his successors, St. Augustine bequeathed the ideal of a society whose bond of union is the Divine Wisdom. Often forgotten, sometimes even for centuries, this ideal has always found men to bring it forth once more into the light of day to be their inspiration. Frequently, the price of revival has been the distortion of the ideal.

It would be a long story to relate how, throughout the

centuries, certain individuals have aspired to establish the City of God on earth, even to the extent of absorbing within it the earthly city; whereas others have tried to transform the Augustinian City of God into a purely earthly city. A few indications will suggest, at least, the breadth of this history and the interest which it presents.

Four centuries after the death of St. Augustine, a new empire was just emerging in Western Europe; at its head was the Emperor Charles, whose biography has all the grandeur of a legend. During the lull between two military campaigns, he was resting at the Palatine Academy; there he learned Latin from Peter of Pisa, discussed ethics with Alcuin, and read a good many books. He found much pleasure in reading the works of St. Augustine, especially *The City of God*.[114] This brief sentence sets us dreaming. What could have been the thoughts of the ruler of the Western world around the year 800, when he read the history of this city, much vaster than his own empire, which was founded by God with the creation of the world, which every nation had helped to build, and which would last as long as time? Doubtless, he passed in review the greatness of his own role in this history. He was aware of this role and, what is more, he intended to play his part. Temporal ruler of the nations which it was his care to lead to God under the aegis of the Church, Charles might have thought that he had brought the mystical city upon earth to embody it in an empire: the body would be the empire; the soul, the mystical city. Why would the Emperor have found delight in such a book as *The City of God,* were it not because the empire which he himself had built was the embodiment of the City

114 Eginhard, *Vita Caroli Magni Imperatoris* no. 24, ed. with French translation by L. Halphen (Paris 1923) 72.

of God? He was not entirely wrong; his dream had the reality at least of a dream. Yet, when he died in 814, his empire perished with him.

Other empires were to come into being after that of Charles, but they, too, disappeared in their turn, leaving behind only a glorious memory and magnificent ruins. Who can say how many empires have become ruins during the life of the Church? Some have perished with the desire of serving the Church, as the empires of Isabella the Catholic and of Charles V; others have fallen, hoping to make use of her, as Napoleon Bonaparte; and the list is not yet complete. Doubtless, the Church will remain as long as the earthly history of the City of God lasts. Yet, such calamities carry a lesson, and the history of the world is already long enough for us to have learned that lesson well.

It would be more correct to say 'lessons,' for they are both many and varied; however, our intention here is to consider but one, of capital importance. Every Christian thinks of his religion, first of all, as a means to his own salvation—which is quite right. The Gospel is addressed directly to each one of us, as the eternally new Good News; the message is that every man is a brother of Christ and a son of God. The soundest guides of the spiritual life have expressed, each in his way and in unforgettable terms, the individual character of the divine adoption and the duty it imposes upon us. St. Bernard wrote: 'Be thou the first object of thy consideration, and be thou also the last.'[115] It is a challenge, whose full justification is made clear to us by Pascal, that Christ saves us individually and each one for himself: 'I thought of thee in mine agony; I have sweated

115 St. Bernard, *On Consideration* 2.3, trans. by a Priest of Mount Melleray (Dublin 1922) 41.

such drops of blood for thee.'[116] It is the first and foremost lesson of all, but we must not forget that, when Christianity came to change the history of the destiny of the individual, the universal history of the world itself was changed.

The individuality of the Christian message is equaled only by its universality. It is not without reason that the Catholic Church signifies the Church of Christ, for Christianity is with complete right universal. From its very birth it was universal, and from the fact alone that it appealed to all men it bore within itself the germ of a universal society, transcending differences of race and, consequently, freed from the limits of both space and time. This revelation has become so familiar to us that it has lost its striking newness. But, it is easily seen that there is hidden within it an enduring mystery unfathomable to the constantly renewed efforts, not only of rulers, but of philosophers and sociologists, to accommodate it to their own advantage. From the dawn of Christianity till our own day, we can trace the unbroken history of social reformers and self-appointed messiahs, attempting finally to accomplish the work that God did not do, that is, to establish the universal society, announced by the Gospel, on its true foundation—it does not matter to them what that foundation is, provided only it be other than that of the Gospel. This latter is a scandal to reason because it transcends it. It is faith.

The idea of a certitude common to all men, and uniting them with the bond of the same truth, was, therefore, something of a surprise; for us today it is commonplace. We meet it everywhere, in manuals of civic education, in propaganda harangues to colonials and even in electioneering speeches.

116 Blaise Pascal, *Pensées* 552, trans. by W. F. Trotter in Everyman's Library (No. 874) 149.

On the other hand, we never meet with the assertion that truth is the same for the illiterate and the learned, since it is communicated to us through faith. That is the stumbling-block for the men of today, the reason of which is easily seen. If there is a modern philosophical proposition which very few would dream of rejecting, it is that, since reason is one and the same in all men, the only truths which can be common to all men are those of reason.

On the other hand, is not faith, inasmuch as it is free from the exigencies of rational demonstration, incommunicable? If it is incommunicable, it constitutes a type of personal conviction, respectable of course, but without any right to impose itself and devoid of the means of universalizing itself. The only truth which could be the same for all is that which the learned teach the unlearned, namely, the truth of reason.

A curious feature of some of these modern philosophical tenets is their venerable antiquity. How could their authors be in doubt about them? For each one of us, history begins at the exact spot where our knowledge of it begins. We consider the substitution of mechanism for Aristotelian finality in the explanation of the structure of living things as a conquest of modern thought. Yet, four centuries before Christ, Aristotle presented purposiveness as a triumph of modern thought over the outmoded mechanism of his predecessors. So, also, in the first century of our era, the union of men through rational truth was far from being a novelty. That experiment had been tried and had turned out a failure, although it had been carried on throughout five centuries of philosophical speculation by men of genius who are still our masters. All the avenues of knowledge were so carefully explored that it is unlikely that new ones will be found. There was the monism of Parmenides of Elea, the atomism of

Democritus, the moralism of Socrates, the idealism of Plato, the realism of Aristotle, the materialism of Zeno, the skepticism of Carneades. Finally, mysticism was introduced by the Pythagoreans of the first century before Christ; it is the last resort of those who desire to know although their reason is in doubt. All these represent so many efforts of pure, unaided reason, directed by the finest intellects of Greece, to which we would owe our whole culture were there no Gospel. Yet, there was no certitude about the world, about man and his destiny, whose evidence could warrant the assent of men. It was high time for St. Paul to speak in his turn: 'What has become of the wise men, the scribes, the philosophers of this age we live in? Must we not say that God has turned our worldly wisdom to folly? When God showed us his wisdom, the world, with all its wisdom, could not find its way to God; and now God would use a foolish thing, our preaching, to save those who will believe in it . . . . So much wiser than men is God's foolishness; so much stronger than men is God's weakness.'[117]

These memorable and epoch-making words in the history of the human spirit have been echoed by many Christian apologists. Why did so many cultured men from the second to the fourth century of our era, given over to every philosophical discipline, eagerly embrace the new faith? Justin, Arnobius, Lactantius, Hilary of Poitiers and a dozen more gave the same response, namely, that faith in the Scriptures was more reasonable than reason. What a strange myth of history: Christianity extinguishing the torch of Greek reason and suddenly plunging the Western world into the darkness of faith!

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117 1 Cor. 1.20-25.

Texts proving the exact opposite are readily available to anyone who cares to read them. Each and every one considered himself delivered from the darkness of reason by the light of faith, the wisest of all wisdoms. It was a great scandal to the aristocrats of life and learning to realize that twenty years and more had been spent in vain, learning little that was of any use; whereas the porters of Rome and Alexandria, and even their own slaves, provided only that they were Christians, had a ready response to every question. Without ever having learned anything except from their humble catechists, these poor people knew that there was but one God, Creator of heaven and earth, who made man to His image and likeness, who providentially watches over man personally, instructs him in the ways of good and evil and conducts him along the way which leads to eternal beatitude. How clear it all was!

But the time had come for God to take a hand. It had been necessary to let man travel the way alone in order to convince him, by his own failure to find it, that the help of God was necessary and that this help was at hand. Lactantius wrote:[118] 'And because it was impossible that the divine method of procedure should become known to man by his own efforts, God did not suffer man any longer to err in search of the light of wisdom, and to wander through inextricable darkness without any result of his labor, but at length opened his eyes, and made the investigation of truth His own gift, so that He might show the nothingness of human wisdom, and point out to man wandering in error the way of obtaining immortality.' But, it is precisely because it presents itself to us as a faith that this message is addressed to all men. 'Therefore, leaving the authors of the earthly phil-

118 Lactantius, *The Divine Institutes* 1.1 (Preface), trans. by W. Fletcher.

osophy, who bring forward nothing certain, let us approach the right path; for, if I considered these to be sufficiently suitable guides to a good life, I would both follow them myself, and exhort others to follow them. But, since they disagree among themselves with great contention, and are for the most part at variance with themselves, it is evident that their path is by no means straightforward; since they have severally marked out distinct paths for themselves according to their own will, and have left great confusion to those seeking for the truth. But, since the truth is revealed from Heaven to us who have received the mystery of true religion, and since we follow God, the Teacher of wisdom and the Guide to truth, we call together all, without any distinction either of sex or of age, to the heavenly pasture.'

Here, we see Christian wisdom laying claim to the centuries-old right to found a universal society composed of all those whose life and thought are regulated by the divine teaching of faith. Here, there was no longer question of founding an empire. This new society was to be generated within the bosom of an empire. There was a time when, to all appearances, it coincided with the empire, but this was an illusion. Later, it seemed to be dependent upon empires; the fact was, however, that it contained them. Empires within the Church fell, without disturbing her by their fall. This was because the bond of unity of the State was of quite a different nature from that of the Church. It is not the law which has united the Church, says St. Ambrose, but the faith of God.[119] No more was it a question of founding a city of philosophers and savants, nor even of uniting into a more or less vast community men under the hegemony of

119 *Letter XXI* 24. (*PL* 16.1057B).

savants and philosophers, since, in order that they be able to unite mankind under the rule of the same truth, it was necessary that they agree among themselves. The city capable of embracing all men is the City of God, that is, the Church. It is precisely in order to be both one and open to all that the Church must live by faith. 'Living by faith'[120] was the way St. Augustine described the heavenly City, and the charter of its divine foundation remains and has not been altered.

The paradoxical problem, to which the Christian faith once gave the answer, has not ceased to be raised in the self-same terms. Rather, it has become more aggravated. On the one hand, the preaching of the Gospel has given birth in the hearts of men to the hope of a universal society of all men, bound together by the bond of a common truth; on the other hand, the continuous progress of science, truly universal in its own order, and capable of giving universally valid solutions for its proper problems, has powerfully strengthened our natural confidence in the universality of reason. Faithful to the profound inspiration of St. Augustine, the Middle Ages had consecrated its best efforts to build this Christian wisdom, whose common acceptance was to unite all men into a single city. That explains the historical function of such immense edifices of ideas as the thirteenth-century commentaries on the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard and the *Summae of theology,* of which that of St. Thomas stands out as the masterpiece. Then, it was a question of marshaling all the forces capable of leading men to the faith: first, the force of reason, which is preambulatory; secondly, that of faith itself in its effort to define, unfold and order itself.

120 *The City of God* 19.17.

Then there appeared on the scene a man endowed with the apostolic spirit and whose intelligence, although somewhat turbulent, was that of a prophet. His was the task of revealing to his contemporaries the ultimate meaning of the work in which all were collaborating, yet without understanding it. From the galaxy of great doctors of the thirteenth century, it was the particular glory of the Franciscan, Roger Bacon, not only to be the herald of the social destiny of Christian wisdom, but also to bring men to a lively awareness of it.[121] No one else ever spoke so emphatically of it, and he it was who gave it its final formulation. This friar knew perfectly well why human reason, universal as it is in its own right, could bring about no agreement. It is because our minds are darkened by original sin. Where sin reigns, wisdom cannot flourish; for, every mortal sin is, by its very character, contrary to wisdom. Where, then, could wisdom be reborn if not in the bosom of the Church, the universal society whose end is the extirpation of sin? No philosophy can surmount such an obstacle; only the wisdom of the faith has such a power; this wisdom is the one perfect wisdom, bestowed by the one God upon one human race in view of a single end, eternal life; it is contained in its entirety in Sacred Scripture and is developed with the aid of philosophical reason investigating the contents of the faith. What an admirable depth there is to this statement of the problem! A single perfect wisdom bestowed upon one human race by one God for a single end. Such is the charter of the only universally human city which is practically possible. Moreover, that is why there can be but one, namely, the common-

121 Roger Bacon, *Opus Majus* (ed. Brewer) 1.33; also, *Opus Tertium* (ed. Brewer) 72-73. Cf. Rudolph Walz, *Das Verhaeltnis von Glaube und Wissen bei Roger Bacon* (Freiburg 1928) 108.

wealth of the faithful, which we call Christianity; one wisdom, one society under one head.

It is hardly worth noting that men were not convinced. That is why we have witnessed, from the end of the Middle Ages, one of the most moving dramas of all history: that of men grasping eagerly for the universal City which God proffers to them, yet attempting to build it as an earthly city. Christian wisdom revealed the means along with the end; men have accepted the end, but have rejected the means. The scandal of the faith has not become easier to endure; it has become less and less bearable, the more human reason furthered its conquests and consolidated its empire. Hence, the curious consequences, of which we could cite a score of striking examples from the Renaissance to our own day, that philosophy and science have usurped the social function of Christian wisdom and have tried to build upon their own universality an earthly society as vast as the City of God.

It would be enthralling to follow this history in all its details, but this, perhaps, is not necessary, for they are innumerable and their meaning is simple. In order that religion might benefit from the universality of reason, it seemed first that it was necessary to transform Christianity into a natural religion. This could not be done without rationalizing dogma, that is, by showing that, basically, Christian Revelation contained nothing that pure reason had not always known. Once this was done, the battle was already won. A universal society could and ought to be produced of itself, whose bond of union would be the universality of reason. How many such dreamers has the modern world not known? How many messiahs of a world saved finally by science and philosophy? At the end of the sixteenth century the Italian Campanella instituted his *City of the Sun,* whose head, as well

as high priest and supreme sage, was the metaphysician, who governs the world by the truth which is found in the great book containing the rational theology of Campanella. Towards the end of the seventeenth century, the German Leibniz, a philosopher and mathematician of genius, once more set the work in motion. Today, however, many seem to think he wrote his *Discourse on Metaphysics* as material for the doctoral dissertations of later generations. But Leibniz had quite another end in view. If the universal city had not yet been established, the reason was that no universal truth had been discovered capable of serving as the bond of union. In the opinion of Leibniz, the Middle Ages had ignored science and, consequently, philosophy as well; Descartes had erred in both science and philosophy, but he himself, he thought, had finally discovered the secrets of both sciences in infinitesimal calculus. Such was the gospel announced to the world in the *Discourse on Metaphysics*; its author already visioned the future city rising above the horizon. Reason, he said, was to be the principle of a universal and perfect religion, and it was only because men had made poor use of their reason that the public revelation of the Messiah had become necessary.[122] And who, if not Leibniz himself, had shown man the correct use of reason? Read the moving chapters which conclude the *Discourse,* or Jean Baruzi's admirable *Leibniz et l'organization religieuse de la terre,* and it will be readily apparent how profound was this philosopher's desire for a universal society of men united by rational truth. Nevertheless, when he died at Hanover in 1716, there was only one mourner in his funeral procession—his own secretary.

122 Gottfried Wilhelm von Leibniz, *Discours de Métaphysique,* ed. H. Lestienne (Paris 1929) 84ff. Cf. Jean Baruzi, *op. cit.,* 508, n. 2.

Leibniz' close friend, John Ker von Kersland was later to remark: 'He was buried like a highway robber.'

There were still more messiahs to further the work. The eighteenth century swarmed with them. It was, as has been remarked, the age of the philosopher's City of God. Among them were some very strange ones, for example, the Abbé de Saint-Pierre, whose *Projet de paix perpetuelle* was a prelude to the League of Nations. There were also great prophets, such as Condorcet, who, in the revolutionary prison where he was to take his own life, wrote his secularized version of Bossuet's *Discourse on Universal History* entitled *Tableau historique des progrès de l'esprit humain.* Daunou was to present it to France in 1795 in the name of the National Assembly in these words: 'It is a classic book offered to your republican schools by an ill-starred philosopher.' Since the world reborn of reason was slow in coming, Henri de Saint-Simon shortly afterwards founded his 'New Christianity' in virtue of a personal revelation from his ancestor, the Emperor Charlemagne; his intention was to reorganize the world with the aid of a true religion. What was Saint-Simon's notion of religion? It was the application of the universal law of gravitation to societies. Religion is the collection of the applications of general science by means of which the enlightened govern the ignorant. This new religion was not yet dead before another was born with its dogmas, priesthood, supreme pontiff, orthodoxy and heresies. It was the religion of Auguste Comte, whose formation can be followed step by step in the three fascinating volumes of Henri Gouhier, *La jeunesse d'Auguste Comte et la formation du positivisme.*[123] The work of Comte is of interest to us because it is an exact

123 Cf., also, *La vie d'Auguste Comte* (Paris 1933), by the same author.

rationalistic counterpart of the Christian solution of the problem of a universal society. We would readily term it an absurd experiment, were it not for the warmth and occasional light which Comte's volcanic genius sometimes sheds.

Rich with the experience accumulated throughout several centuries of history, Auguste Comte well knew that the unity of society drew its strength from its bond of union established by the system of ideas which served as its inspiration. Every social systematization thus depended upon a speculative systematization; the social order of the Middle Ages, which had derived its life from theological dogma, had disappeared with it when Scholasticism had been destroyed by the metaphysical dogma of the seventeenth century, which, in turn, had succumbed to the scientific criticism of the end of the eighteenth century. These events were irrevocable. The retrograde attempts of De Bonald and De Maistre to return Europe to the Middle Ages had proved vain. All that was left to do was to draw from science the general conclusions which, under the name of 'positive philosophy,' were to form the unifying dogma of the future society. For, philosophy would engender a political system, followed by a religion whose supreme pontiff would be Auguste Comte, who in turn would establish a Western Republic, with Paris as the capital until such time as it could be transferred to Constantinople, the future metropolis of Humanity. Every provision was made for this society, even to its army and navy, and to its coinage, which of course would bear the image of Charlemagne. Comte neglected nothing that would assure success. He was well aware that a supreme pontiff could not get along without the Jesuits; consequently, he tried to win them to the cause and offered them in exchange for their antiquated and outmoded dogma the new positivist dogma which was to conquer the world.

However, the Jesuits did not change popes. When Comte died in 1857, he was less alone than Leibniz. He left behind in Europe and in Brazil a handful of faithful, who continued to live by his thought, but who gave no indication of conquering the earth. Occasionally, to refresh his memories of ancient Paris, a visitor to the Musée Carnavalet looks out of a window opening on a little street; immediately before him, almost within arm's reach, he sees a dilapidated house on whose facade there is a picture representing a kind of Blessed Virgin or Virgin Mother; however, she is neither holy nor virgin nor mother. When we think of the magnificent dream which haunts this poor structure, we have no desire to smile; the sight is too tragic. If providence has placed there the remains of the Western Republic, it is doubtless that it may one day be annexed to the nearby Musée as one more souvenir of old Paris. Nor is the end in sight. In our own day, Russian Marxism is making strenuous efforts to turn the same dream into concrete reality. Save for the element of nationalist propaganda, its whole content derives its inspiriation from the will to ensure the unity of mankind; this time, however, the unity is to be achieved not through spiritual truths, but through economic unity. Men now seek their unifying force in matter, which is a principle of individuation, and therefore of division. Is this not one more case of a Christian idea gone mad? G. K. Chesterton once said that the world is full of such ideas, and he was right. But, when it in turn fails, which is inevitable, what next?

When the Christian becomes aware of the efforts of so many noble spirits in search of a better and vaster society than our own, he realizes the infinite value of the gift he has received and the responsibility which acceptance of the gift imposes upon him. This City common to all men already

exists and continuously builds itself up from living stones one by one, through the ceaselessly multiplied adherence of all those who live by faith. That is why the Church so diligently watches over the deposit of faith which has been entrusted to her. Some find her severe, stubborn, intransigent and, to use a term dear to the modern conscience, intolerant. They would like her to be more flexible, more accommodating, more open to the progress accomplished century after century by human reason. Yet, how is it possible not to see in the light of history the divine Wisdom which guides her and the meaning of her fidelity? Twenty centuries of philosophy will soon be added to the five centuries of experience of which St. Paul has written the appraisal. If the great Apostle of the Gentiles were to return to our midst today, would he speak otherwise? Philosophers are no more in agreement in our day than in his in their answers to the vital problems which man and his destiny pose for us. Our philosophical dialogues are resolved into parallel monologues, which the consciousness of fidelity to the party line dispenses from all other justification.

The desire of the world-wide unity which fills the heart of man will, in all likelihood, never die. Since the time it was proffered them, even though in a mystical sense and on a supernatural level, it has never been forgotten. Generation after generation has honestly attempted to gather all men within the walls of an earthly city modeled upon the heavenly Jerusalem. They have studied everything except the Christian faith in order to find a common bond, but they have met with failure. Perhaps the time is ripe to recall the age-old metaphysical principle that the only force capable of preserving a thing is the force which created it. It is completely useless to pursue a Christian end except by Christian means. If we

really want one world, we must first have one Church, and the only Church that is one is the Catholic Church.

Had we religious unity, we could peacefully enjoy all the other unities. Basically, there is nothing wrong in attempting to achieve philosophical unity by philosophical means, nor in trying to establish world unity through philosophical unity. Philosophy really is a unifying force, as are science, art, industry and economic forces. There is no single factor in human unity that we can afford to despise. But, just as every metaphysical undertaking is doomed to failure if secondary principles replace those which are primary, so also all efforts to unify mankind are bound to fail if the sole principle of unification is overlooked, especially when that principle is the unifying force of all the others. Philosophy, science, art and economics all can help in achieving the great work of uniting mankind, but neither individually nor collectively is it in their power to accomplish it. The besetting sin of all such undertakings is in the fact that they attempt, without Christ, to fulfill the promise made by Christ to men.

Such an achievement is quite impossible. It is conceivable that a number of men, more or less large, be unified under the domination of other men or even of one individual; however, if we are striving toward the unity of all men, we must look beyond mankind for the unifying principle. The only possible source of future unity lies not in multiplicity, but above it. *One World* is impossible without *One God* and *One Church*. In this truth lies the ever timely message conveyed to man by St. Augustine's *City of God*.

SAINT AUGUSTINE

THE CITY OF GOD

BOOKS I-VII

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BOOK I

Preface

MY DEAR MARCELLINUS:[1] This work which I have begun makes good my promise to you. In it I am undertaking nothing less than the task of defending the glorious City of God against those who prefer their own gods to its Founder. I shall consider it both in its temporal stage here below (where it journeys as a pilgrim among sinners and lives by faith) and as solidly established in its eternal abode—that blessed goal for which we patiently hope 'until justice be turned into judgment,'[2] but which, one day, is to

1 Marcellinus, fervent Christian and, until his death in September, 413, close friend of St. Augustine, was appointed by the Emperor Honorius (395-423) as a Comissioner to deal with the dispute between Catholics and Donatists in North Africa. Eager for the conversion of the pagan but well-disposed imperial proconsul, Volusianus, he sought the help of Augustine and was thus the occasion for the correspondence between the proconsul and the saint which still survives and throws much light on the beginnings of the *City of God*. Added to Volusianus' dogmatic difficulties was the tremendous scandal, for a pagan, that, after eight centuries of political stability under pagan worship and pagan philosophy of life, Rome should be attacked and looted in 410 by Alaric the Goth, less than one century after the conversion of Constantine to Christianity and less than thirty years after the Emperor Gratian, at the request of St. Ambrose, removed from the Senate the pagan altar to Victory. It was to face this difficulty that St. Augustine began in 412 (and finished in 415) the first five Books which, as he tells us in his *Retractations* (chap. 69), were meant as a refutation of the pagan position that polytheism is necessary for social prosperity and that the prohibition of pagan worship 'is the source of many calamities.'

2 Ps. 93.15.

be the reward of excellence in a final victory and a perfect peace. The task, I realize, is a high and hard one, but God will help me.[3]

I know, of course, what ingenuity and force of arguments are needed to convince proud men of the power of humility. Its loftiness is above the pinnacles of earthly greatness which are shaken by the shifting winds of time—not by reason of human arrogance, but only by the grace of God. For, in Holy Scripture, the King and Founder of the City of which I have undertaken to speak revealed to His people the judgment of divine law: 'God resisteth the proud and giveth grace to the humble.'[4] Unfortunately the swollen spirit of human pride claims for itself this high prerogative, which belongs to God alone, and longs and loves to hear repeated in its own praise the line: 'To be merciful to the conquered and beat the haughty down.'[5]

Hence, in so far as the general plan of the treatise demands and my ability permits, I must speak also of the earthly city —of that city which lusts to dominate the world and which, though nations bend to its yoke, is itself dominated by its passion for dominion.

Chapter 1

From this earthly city issue the enemies against whom the City of God must be defended. Some of them, it is true, abjure their worldly error and become worthy members in God's City. But many others, alas, break out in blazing hatred against it and are utterly ungrateful, notwithstanding its

3 Ps. 61.9.
4 James 4.6; 1 Peter 5.5.
5 Virgil, *Aeneid* 6.853.

Redeemer's signal gifts. For, they would no longer have a voice to raise against it, had not its sanctuaries given them asylum as they fled before the invaders' swords, and made it possible for them to save that life of which they are so proud.

Have not even those very Romans whom the barbarians spared for the sake of Christ assailed His Name? To this both the shrines of the martyrs and the basilicas of the Apostles bear witness: amid the city's devastation, these buildings gave refuge not only to the faithful but even to infidels. Up to the sacred threshold raged the murderous enemy, but the slayers' fury went no farther. The merciful among the enemy conducted to the churches those whom they had spared even outside the holy precincts, to save them from others who lacked such mercy. Even these ruthless men, who in other places customarily indulged their ferocity against enemies, put a rein to their murderous fury and curbed their mania for taking captives, the moment they reached the holy places. Here, the law of sanctuary forbade what the law of war elsewhere permitted. Thus were saved many of those who now cry down Christian culture and who blame Christ for the calamities that befell the city. Indeed, that very mercy to which they owe their lives and which was exercised in Christ's Name they ascribe not to our Christ but to their Fate. Yet, if they only had sense, they would see that the hardships and cruelties they suffered from the enemy came from that Divine Providence who makes use of war to reform the corrupt lives of men. They ought to see that it is the way of Providence to test by such afflictions men of virtuous and exemplary life, and to call them, once tried, to a better world, or to keep them for a while on earth for the accomplishment of other purposes. As for the fact that the fierce barbarians, contrary to the usage of war, generally spared their lives for

Christ's sake and, in particular, in places dedicated to Christ's Name—which by a merciful Providence were spacious enough to afford refuge to large numbers—this they should have credited to Christian culture. They should thank God and, if they would escape the pains of eternal fire, should turn to His Name with all sincerity—as many have, without sincerity, in order to escape the results of the present ruin.

For, many of those whom you see heaping impudent abuse on the servants of Christ would not have escaped the ruin and massacre had they not falsely paraded as servants of Christ. Now, with ungrateful pride, impious madness, and perversity of heart, they work against that Name. They who turned to that Name with a lying tongue, in order to enjoy this temporal light, deserve the penalty of eternal darkness.

Chapter 2

The chronicles are filled with wars waged before Rome was founded, and since it rose and grew to be an empire. Let the pagans read these chronicles, and then adduce one single instance of a city falling into the hands of a foe disposed to spare men seeking refuge in the temples of their gods. Or let them even point to a single barbarian chieftain who captured a town and then ordered his soldiers not to kill those caught in any of the temples. Did not Aeneas see Priam cut down before the altar, 'polluting with his blood the altar fires of his own consecration?'[1] And did not Diomedes and Ulysses 'cut down the sentries in the towered height; since they grasped the holy image and dared with bloody hands to touch the maiden chaplets of the goddess'?[2] Nor did that

1 *Aeneid* 2.501.
2 *Ibid.* 2.166ff.

which follows come true: 'Since then the hope of Greece ebbed and slid away.'[3] For, after this, they conquered; after this, they wiped out Troy with fire and sword; after this, they cut off Priam's head before the altar to which he fled. Nor did Troy perish because it lost its Palladium—Minerva. And what had Minerva herself first lost that she should perish? The guardians of her statue? To be sure, once they were slain, Minerva could be taken away. It was not the effigy that guarded the men, but the men who guarded the effigy. For what earthly reason was Minerva worshiped as the protector of the land and people, when she could not even protect the guards of her temple?

Chapter 3

Just think of the kind of gods to whose protection the Romans were content to entrust their city! No more pathetic illusion could be imagined. Yet, the pagans are angry with us because we speak so frankly of their divinities. However, they feel no anger against their own writers. They even pay them a fee to teach such nonsense, and think such teachers worthy of public salary and honors. Take Virgil. Children must read this greatest and best of all poets in order to impress their tender minds so deeply that he may never be easily forgotten, much as the well-known words of Horace suggest:

> The liquors that new vessel first contains
> Behind them leave a taste that long remains.[1]

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3 *Ibid.*

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1 Horace, *Epistles* 1.2.69.

Now, in Virgil, Juno is pictured as the foe of the Trojans and as saying, while she goads Aeolus, King of the Winds, against them:

> The nation that I hate in peace sails by,
> With Troy and Troy's fallen gods to Italy.[2]

Did they act wisely in placing Rome's immunity from defeat in the hands of such vanquished deities? Even assuming that Juno spoke these words in a fit of feminine anger, not knowing what she said, does not Aeneas himself, so often styled 'the pious,' relate how

> Panthus, a priest of Phoebus and the Tower,
> Rushed with his nephew and the conquered gods
> And, frantic, sought for shelter at my door.[3]

Does he not admit that the very gods, whom he declares 'conquered' are entrusted to his protection rather than he to theirs, when he is given the charge, 'To thee doth Troy commend her gods, her all'?[4] If, then, Virgil describes such gods as vanquished, and, because vanquished, needing a man's help even to escape, surely it is folly to believe that it was wise to entrust Rome to the safe-keeping of such divinities, and to believe that Rome could never be destroyed unless it lost its gods. In fact, to worship fallen gods as patrons and defenders

2 Virgil, *Aeneid* 1.67.
3 *Ibid.* 2.319ff.
4 *Ibid.* 2.293.

is more like having poor odds[5] than good gods. It is much more sensible to believe, not so much that Rome would have been saved from destruction had not the gods perished, but rather that the gods would have perished long ago had not Rome made every effort to save them.

For, who does not see, if only he stops to consider, how futile it is to presume that Rome could not be conquered when protected by conquered custodians, and that the reason it fell was that it lost its tutelary deities? Surely, the only possible reason why Rome should fall was that it wanted vincible protectors. Hence, when all these things were written and sung about the fallen gods, it was not because the poets took pleasure in lying, but because truth compelled intelligent men to avow them. However, this matter will be more fitly and more fully treated in subsequent chapters. Here I shall do my best to wind up in few words what I began to say about men's ingratitude.

These men, I say, hold Christ responsible for the evils which they deservedly suffer for their wicked lives. They have not the slightest appreciation of the fact, that, when they deserved to be punished, they were spared for Christ's sake. On the contrary, with impious perversity and bitterness, they attack His Name with those very tongues which falsely invoked that Name to save them. The very tongues which, like cowards, they held in check in the sacred places when safe, protected and unharmed by the enemy for Christ's sake, they now use to hurl malicious curses against Him.

5 . . . *tenere non numina bona, sed nomina mala. Nomina mala* (if that is the correct reading and not *omina mala*) should be translated as 'bad debtors,' in the sense that the pagan gods do not pay back salvation in return for the worship given them; but for the sake of imitating the paronomasia, *numina . . . nomina*, 'gods' and 'odds' have been used. See note in *De civitate Dei*, ed. Emanuel Hoffman, *CSEL* XXXX (Vienna 1899) 8.

Chapter 4

As I have already suggested, Troy herself, parent of the Roman people, for all her sanctuaries of the gods, offered to her pious citizens no protection from the fire and sword of the Greeks. On the contrary, 'in Juno's sanctuary, with its now emptied porticoes, the chosen sentries, Phoenix and accursed Ulysses, were guarding the spoil. Here, the treasure of Troy was flung in heaps, torn from robbed and ruined shrines—altars of the gods, chalices of solid gold, and stolen vestments. And in a long file, children and frightened mothers stood around.'[1] They chose a temple consecrated to a high goddess, not as a holy place from which it was forbidden to remove captives, but as a prison house to encage them. And now, compare the temple—not of a god of the common sort or of one of the rabble of lesser deities, but of Jupiter's own sister and consort, and queen of all the gods—compare that with the churches raised in memory of the Apostles!

To the temple was dragged the plunder snatched from the deities and burning temples, not to be distributed among the vanquished, but to be divided among the victors; to the basilicas, on the contrary, whatever was found elsewhere that belonged to them was restored with the utmost reverence and piety. In the temple, men lost their freedom; here, they found it. There, captives were walled in; here, captivity was banned. There, human beings were herded together by a tyrannical foe in order to be carried away into slavery; here, they were led by a merciful foe in order to be liberated. Lastly, compare the Greek dandies plying their greed and pride in the temple of Juno with the uncouth barbarians

1 *Aeneid* 2.761ff.

exercising mercy and humility toward the churches of Christ.

Some may be willing to believe that, in their victory, the Greeks spared the temples of their common gods, and had no heart to strike down or capture the wretched and beaten Trojans who sought refuge there, and that Virgil, like a poet, made the story out of his own head. The fact is, however, that Virgil merely describes what enemies have the custom of doing when sacking a town.

Chapter 5

Of that custom, according to Sallust, a historian of outstanding truthfulness, Cato gives a sample in the speech on the conspirators which he delivered in the Senate: 'Girls and young boys are ravished, children are torn from their parents' arms, matrons must submit to the victor's lust, temples and homes are plundered, murder and arson, weapons and corpses, blood and lamentations everywhere.'[1] Had he not mentioned temples, one might believe that enemies spared the abodes of the gods. And note that those horrors were to be feared for the Roman temples not merely from foreign foes, but from Catiline and his associates, all highly respected Senators and Roman citizens. But, I suppose, they were also villains and traitors to their country.

Chapter 6

There is no need to speak of other warring nations who never gave quarter to the victims they found in the temples of the gods. Let us take a look at the Romans themselves. Let us recall to mind and consider the Romans, whose chief

1 Sallust, *Catilina* 51.

boast it was 'to be merciful to the conquered and beat the haughty down,'[1] and who were more ready to forgive than avenge a suffered wrong. Among the innumerable notable cities they captured and destroyed in order to extend their sway, where do we read that they passed over the temples in order to give a chance of escape to those who took refuge there. Is it possible that they were magnanimous enough to do so, but that the chroniclers have made no mention of such facts? Is it likely that their historians, who were on the look-out for anything deserving of praise, would pass over what they considered admirable examples of mercy?

That eminent Roman, Marcus Marcellus, who captured the magnificent city of Syracuse is reported to have wept over the prospect of its destruction and to have shed his own tears for it before he shed the blood of its inhabitants.[2] He respected the chastity of its women, and, before surrounding the city he issued an ordinance forbidding an attack on the body of any free person.[3] Yet, in keeping with the custom of war, the city was laid waste, and we nowhere read that the general, for all his clemency and concern for chastity, enjoined that those who fled to a temple should enjoy immunity. No chronicler would have failed to mention this, since both the general's weeping and his decree against carnal license were duly recorded.

Fabius, the conqueror of Tarentum, is praised for refraining from carrying off the statues of the gods. When his secretary asked him what was to be done with the many sacred images that had been captured, he spiced his mercy with a touch of malice. He inquired what kind of statues they were.

1 Virgil, *Aeneid* 6.853.
2 Cf. Livy 25.24.
3 *Ibid.* 25.

On being told that many of them were not only large in size but also armed, he retorted: 'Let the Tarentines keep their ill-tempered gods!'[4] If the Roman historians could mention the tears and chivalrous mercy of Marcellus and the laughing malice and mock restraint of Fabius, how could they have forgotten to mention the fact that if those generals had spared anyone in honor of some god or other, by forbidding slaughter or the taking of prisoners in temples?

Chapter 7

All the destruction, slaughter, plundering, burning, and distress visited upon Rome in its latest calamity were but the normal aftermath of war. It was something entirely new that fierce barbarians, by an unprecedented turn of events, showed such clemency that vast basilicas were designated as places where refugees might assemble with assurance of immunity. There, no one was to be slain or raped; many destined for liberation were to be led there by the compassionate enemy; from there, none was to be dragged away into captivity by a cruel foe. That this was in honor of the Name of Christ and to the credit of Christian civilization is manifest to all. To see this and not acknowledge it with praise is ingratitude. To impugn those who give us credit is utterly unreasonable. Let no man with sense ascribe this to the savage ways of the barbarians. It was God who struck awe into ruthless and bloodthirsty hearts, who curbed and wondrously tamed them. God who long ago spoke these words by the mouth of the Prophet; 'I will visit their iniquities with a rod: and their sins with stripes. But My mercy I will not take away from them.'[1]

4 *Ibid.* 27.16.

1 Ps. 88.33,34.

Chapter 8

But, someone will say: 'How, then, is it that this divine mercy was bestowed on impious and ungrateful man?' Surely, the answer is that mercy was shown by the One who, day by day, 'maketh His sun to rise upon the good and bad, and raineth upon the just and the unjust.'[1] For, although some who reflect on these truths repent and are converted from their wickedness, others, according to the words of the Apostle, despise 'the riches of His goodness and long-suffering, in the hardness of their heart and impenitence' and treasure up to themselves 'wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the just judgment of God Who will render to every man according to his works.'[2] Nevertheless, God's patience is an invitation to the wicked to do penance, just as God's scourge is a school of patience for the good. In like manner, God's mercy embraces the good with love, just as His severity corrects the wicked with punishment. It has pleased Divine Providence to prepare for the just joys in the world to come in which the unjust will have no part; and for the impious, pains which will not afflict the virtuous. But, as for the paltry goods and evils of this transitory world, these He allotted alike to just and unjust, in order that men might not seek too eagerly after those goods which they see even the wicked to possess, or shrink too readily from those ills which commonly afflict the just.

However, there is a vast difference between the manner in which men use what we call prosperity and adversity. A good man is neither puffed up by fleeting success nor broken by adversity; whereas, a bad man is chastised by failure of this sort because he is corrupted by success. God often shows His

1 Matt. 5.45.
2 Rom. 2.4ff.

intervention more clearly by the way He apportions the sweet and the bitter. For, if He visited every sin here below with manifest penalty, it might be thought that no score remained to be settled at the Last Judgment. On the other hand, if God did not plainly enough punish sin on earth, people might conclude that there is no such thing as Divine Providence. So, too, in regard to the good things of life. If God did not bestow them with patent liberality on some who ask Him, we could possibly argue that such things did not depend on His power. On the other hand, if He lavished them on all who asked, we might have the impression that God is to be served only for the gifts He bestows. In that case, the service of God would not make us religious, but rather covetous and greedy. In view of all that, when good and bad men suffer alike, they are not, for that reason indistinguishable because what they suffer is similar. The sufferers are different even though the sufferings are the same trials; though what they endure is the same, their virtue and vice are different.

For, in the same fire, gold gleams and straw smokes; under the same flail the stalk is crushed and the grain threshed; the lees are not mistaken for oil because they have issued from the same press. So, too, the tide of trouble will test, purify, and improve the good, but beat, crush, and wash away the wicked. So it is that, under the weight of the same affliction, the wicked deny and blaspheme God, and the good pray to Him and praise Him. The difference is not in what people suffer but in the way they suffer. The same shaking that makes fetid water stink makes perfume issue a more pleasant odor.

Chapter 9

What, then, did the Christians suffer in the great devastation of Rome which, if taken in a spirit of faith, would not

have served for their greater good? For one thing, if they humbly called to mind the sins for which God in His anger filled the world with calamities, they will not judge themselves to be so little responsible for these sins as not to have deserved some measure of temporal affliction—even though they were far from being criminals and godless men. The fact is that everyone, however exemplary, yields to some promptings of concupiscence: if not to monstrous crimes, abysmal villainy, and abominable impiety, at least to some sins, however rarely or—if frequently—however venially. Apart from this fact, I say, is it easy to find anyone who treats as he should those whose horrible pride, lust, avarice, damnable depravity, and scoffing impiety caused God to lay desolate the earth, as was threatened in prophecy? For the most part, we hesitate to instruct, to admonish, and, as occasion demands, to correct, and even to reprehend them. This we do either because the effort wearies us, or we fear offending them, or we avoid antagonizing them lest they thwart or harm us in those temporal matters where our cupidity ever seeks to acquire or our faint hearts fear to lose.

Thus, good men shun the wicked and hence will not share in their damnation beyond the grave. Nevertheless, because they wink at their worse sins and fear to frown even on their minor transgressions, the good must in justice suffer temporal afflictions in common with the rest—even though they will escape the eternal. Thus, when God's hand falls as heavily on them as on the others, it is just that they should taste the bitter things of this earthly life, because they loved the sweet things and refused to feel compunction while others sinned. At times, one hesitates to reprove or admonish evil-doers, either because one seeks a more favorable moment or fears that his rebuke may make them worse, and further, discour-

age weak brethren from striving to lead a good and holy life, or turn them aside from the faith. In such circumstance, forbearance is not prompted by selfish considerations, but by well-advised charity. What is reprehensible, however, is that, while leading good lives themselves and abhorring those of wicked men, some, fearing to offend, shut their eyes to evil deeds instead of condemning them and pointing out their malice. To be sure, the motive behind their tolerance is that they may suffer no hurt in the possession of those temporal goods which virtuous and blameless men may lawfully enjoy; still, there is more self-seeking here than becomes men who are mere sojourners in this world and who profess the hope of a home in heaven.

In truth, it is not only people of less lofty virtue, who live in the married state, having (or seeking to have) children, and possessing a home and household of their own—people such as St. Paul, in the first churches, instructed and admonished how to live:[1] wives with husbands and husbands with wives; children with parents and parents with children; servants with masters and masters with servants—it is not only such people who acquire transitory and earthly goods with zest and lose them with chagrin, and, because of that, dare not offend men whose immoral and vicious life revolts them. Even those who profess a more perfect life and are free from conjugal bonds and content with poorer food and dress are also over-solicitous for their good name and security and frequently forbear to reprehend the wicked, because they fear their snares and violence. Though the good do not fear the wicked to the point of stooping, under intimidation, to their villainies and knavery, they often are unwilling to denounce

1 Col. 3.18-25; Eph. 5.22; 6.9.

such things, even when they might convert some souls thereby. Here again they fear that a possible failure to effect reform might jeopardize their security and reputation. It is not that they are convinced that these latter are an indispensable means for the instruction of men. They are merely victims of that human infirmity which loves the flattering tongue and earthly life, and which dreads the censure of the crowd and the anguish and death of the body. In other words, they shirk this duty of fraternal correction because of a certain slavishness to avarice, not because of the obligations of charity.

Hence, this seems to me sufficient enough reason why the good are scourged with the wicked as often as it pleases God to punish degenerate morals with temporal sufferings. Both are scourged, not because both lead a bad life, but because both love an earthly life; not, indeed, to the same extent, but yet both together—a life which the good should think little of in order that the bad, by being admonished and reformed, may attain to eternal life. If the wicked refuse to join in the blessed endeavor, they should be suffered withal and loved as enemies are loved in Christian charity, since, as long as they live, there is always the possibility that they may come to a better mind. In this respect, the good men to whom the Prophet addresses these words, 'He is indeed taken away in his iniquity, but I will require his blood at the hand of the watchman,'[2] have not merely an equal but a far graver reason for concern or reflection. For this reason, overseers[3] or rulers are set over the churches, to reprimand sin, not to spare it. Nor is a man fully free from blame who is not in authority,

2 Ezech. 33.6.

3 St. Augustine's word is *speculatores,* possibly a Latin equivalent for *episkopoi* (bishops) or for *skopoi* (lay guardians of discipline).

but who notices in those persons he meets in social life many faults he should censure and admonish. He is blameworthy if he fails to do this out of fear of hurting feelings or of losing such things as he may licitly enjoy in this life, but to which he is unduly attached. Finally, there is another reason, well known to Job, why even good men must drink the bitter cup of temporal adversity: in order that the human spirit may test its mettle and come to know whether it loves God with the virtue of religion and for His own sake.

Chapter 10

Take all those truths into due and thoughtful consideration and then ask whether there has befallen men of faith and piety any evil which could not work to their good, according to the pregnant saying of St. Paul: 'We know that to them that love God all things work together unto good.'[1] One might say: They have lost everything they had. But, is that really true? Have they, for instance, lost their faith? or their piety? or any of those treasures of an interior life which make a man rich before God? These are the treasures of Christian men, and the Apostle Paul, who abounded in them, declared: 'But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and certainly we can carry nothing out. But having food, and wherewith to be covered, with these we are content. For they that will become rich, fall into temptation; and into the snare of the devil, and into many unprofitable and hurtful devices which drown men into destruction and perdition. For the desire of money is the root

1 Rom. 8.28.

of all evils; which some coveting have erred from the faith, and have entangled themselves in many sorrows.'[2]

Hence, if those who lost their possessions in that devastation owned them in the spirit of the Apostle who was poor in goods but rich in spirit, that is, if they used this world as if they used it not,[3] then they could say with the sorely tried but unconquerable Job: 'Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away: as it hath pleased the Lord so is it done: blessed be the name of the Lord.'[4] Like a good servant, Job regarded his Lord's will as his greatest wealth. Following Him, he grew rich in spirit, and was not saddened by having to abandon in life those things which he would shortly have to abandon in death. But, those feebler souls, who were attached to these goods of earth without loving them more than Christ, realized by the loss of those goods how much they had sinned through inordinate attachment. For, according to the Apostle's words quoted above, their regret was proportionate to the trouble they made for themselves. Since they had made light of the lesson taught them by words, it was fitting that they should be taught in the harder school of experience. For, when the Apostle said: 'For they that become rich fall into temptation,'[5] he rebuked not so much wealth as the hankering after it. Further on, he bids Timothy: 'Charge the rich of this world not to be highminded nor trust in the uncertainty of riches but in the living God (who giveth us abundantly all things to enjoy). To do good, to be rich in good works, to give easily, to communicate to others,

2 1 Tim. 6.6-10.
3 1 Cor. 7.31.
4 Job. 1.21.
5 1 Tim. 6.9.

to lay up store for themselves in good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on the true life.'[6] They that used their riches in this manner were compensated for small losses by great gains. From the goods which they distributed to others and so placed in greater safety they derived more happiness than they incurred sorrow from the goods which they anxiously hoarded and so lost more easily.

Nothing could be really lost on earth save what one would be ashamed to take to heaven. There were some who took to heart their Lord's counsel: 'Lay not up to yourselves treasures on earth: where the rust and moth consume, and where thieves break through and steal. But lay up to yourselves treasures in heaven: where neither the rust nor moth doth consume, and where thieves do not break through nor steal. For where thy treasure is, there is thy heart also.'[7] Those in time of trial proved how wise they were in heeding the teaching of that Master who is the very Truth and the most faithful and invincible Guardian of their treasure. For, if many rejoiced who kept their wealth where the enemy had little chance of access, how much more truly and surely could those rejoice who took God's warning and betook themselves with their treasure whither the enemy could not possibly come at all?

That is why my friend Paulinus, Bishop of Nola, exchanged great wealth for voluntary poverty, and became very rich in holiness. When the barbarians sacked his town of Nola and he fell into their hands, in his heart he prayed thus, as he later told me: 'O Lord, do not permit me to be troubled on account of gold and silver; Thou knowest where all my treasures are.' For, he had stored all his goods where he had been

6 1 Tim. 6.17-19.
7 Matt. 6.19-21.

told to lay up treasures by Him who had foretold that these miseries would come upon the world. Thus, those who obeyed the Lord, who told them where and how they should lay up their treasure, did not lose even their earthly riches to the invading barbarians. But, those who lived to regret having disobeyed the advice as to the disposal of their goods learned the lesson—if not by wise foresight, at least by subsequent experience.

Some good Christians were tortured to reveal to their enemies where their goods were hid. But, the good by which they themselves were good they could neither reveal nor lose. Yet, if they chose to be tortured rather than reveal the Mammon of iniquity, they were not good. At the same time, those who suffered for gold as much as one should suffer for Christ needed to be admonished. They needed to learn to love Him, who made martyrs rich with eternal bliss, rather than to love gold and silver; to suffer for those was pitiable, indeed, whether they concealed their possessions by lies or revealed them by telling the truth. For, when facing torture, no one lost Christ by confessing Him, and no one saved his gold except by denying Him. On the whole, sufferings which taught men to love an imperishable good were better than possessions which tortured their owners to no purpose.

There were others who had nothing to reveal, but were not believed and were put to the torture. Perhaps they had yearned for wealth and were not by choice poor in spirit. These had to be taught that it was not riches but covetousness that deserved the torments to which they were subjected. Of those who, to live a more perfect life, had laid up no gold or silver, one or other may have been put to the torture in the belief that they had hidden wealth. If this did happen, anyone who thus confessed holy poverty surely confessed Christ

Himself. Though his word was not taken, such a martyr of holy poverty surely was not tortured without recompense in Heaven.

Prolonged famine, they say, caused many Christians to waste away. Here again, by holy patience good Christians turned suffering to excellent account. For, those who perished of hunger were deliverd from the ills of this life, as they might have been by sickness; those who did not perish were taught the two-fold lesson of living more frugally and fasting more frequently.

Chapter 11

To be sure, many Christians perished—some of them by the foulest kinds of death. If this is to be lamented, we nevertheless must recall that death is the common lot of all who have been born on earth. This much I know: that not one person died who was not destined sooner or later to die. Moreover, life's ending abolishes all difference between a long and a short life. For, of two things that no longer exist, one can hardly be said to be better and the other worse, or one longer and the other shorter. What difference does it make what kind of death puts an end to life, when one from whom it is taken away is not obliged to die again? Since, with all the risks that daily threaten life, every mortal is in a measure exposed to every kind of death and is uncertain which of them he will meet, I ask which is preferable: to suffer one form of death once for all, or to keep on living in constant dread of all? I know, of course, how much more readily people choose to keep on living in fear of many deaths than to die once and fear no further death. But, what the sensitive flesh shrinks from in trepidation is one thing, and what the mind's clear-sighted and careful reason proves

beyond doubt is quite another. No death is to be deemed evil which has been preceded by a good life; nor can anything make death evil save what follows it. Consequently, those who must inevitably die need not be concerned how death comes, but whither they must go when dead. Since good Christians know that the death of the God-fearing pauper with the dogs licking his sores was far better than that of the impious rich man 'clothed in purple and fine linen,'[1] what harm have those horrible deaths done to the dead who have lived worthily?

Chapter 12

It is objected further that, amid such a general massacre, it was not even possible to bury corpses. Genuine faith is not too much horrified by this calamity, since it holds fast to the prophetic assurance that not even devouring wild beasts can harm the bodies of those who will rise again and from whose heads not one hair shall perish.[1] Truth Himself would never have said: 'Fear ye not them that kill the body and are not able to kill the soul,'[2] if whatever the enemy might do to the bodies of the slain could in any way imperil the life to come. Surely, no one is absurd enough to contend that those who kill the body are not to be feared before death, because they can kill the body, and yet must be feared after death, because they can prevent the burial of the body. In this view, those who have power to do so much harm to a corpse give the lie to Christ's words when He spoke of those 'who kill the body and after that have no more that they can do.'[3]

1 Luke 16.19ff.

1 Cf. Luke 21.18.
2 Matt. 10.28.
3 Luke 12.4.

God forbid that Truth Himself should have uttered falsehood. What His words mean is that they can do something while they are killing, because there is feeling in the body being killed, but that afterwards there is no more that they can do, because there is no feeling in a body that is dead. So, there may be many bodies of Christians that lie unburied, but not a single one of them has been separated from the Heaven and earth which are filled with the presence of Him who knows how to bring back to life the work of His creative hands. The Psalmist says: 'They have given the dead bodies of Thy servants to be meat for the fowls of the air: the flesh of Thy saints for the beasts of the earth. They have poured out their blood as water, round about Jerusalem, and there was none to bury them.'[4] But, that was said rather to set in relief the barbarity of those who did such things rather than the misery of those who suffered them. For, however ghastly and shocking all this may be in the eyes of men, 'precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints.'[5]

In view of all this, such things as funeral arrangements, the manner of sepulture, and the pomp of the obsequies are meant to be a solace to the living rather than a service to the dead. A costly funeral can do no more good to a villain than a cheap one or none at all can harm a saint. Magnificent in men's eyes were the obsequies which a mob of servants provided for the rich man clad in purple, but far more glorious in the eyes of God were those of the ministering angels for the beggar covered with sores—they did not take him to a marble tomb, but bore him up to the bosom of Abraham.

Those against whom I have undertaken to vindicate the City of God will smile at all this. But, even their own philo-

4 Ps. 78.2,3.
5 Ps. 115.15.

sophers have thought little of the pomp of funerals; and, often enough, entire armies, dying for an earthly fatherland, took no thought as to where they would afterwards lie, or of what beasts they would become the food—so that without too much exaggeration a poet could sing: 'All heaven is tomb to him who lacks a grave.'[6] There is still less reason to scorn the unburied bodies of Christians, when we remember the sure promise that their flesh and all its members shall be restored and renewed in the twinkling of an eye, not out of the earth alone, but out of the mysterious recesses of all the other elements into which their disintegrated bodies were resolved.

Chapter 13

Nevertheless, that is no reason for treating with contempt and carting away the bodies of the dead, particularly those of just and believing men, which the Holy Spirit has used as instruments and vessels for the performance of all good works. For, if a father's ring, robe, and the like, are the dearer to children the greater their affection for their parents, human bodies, which are more intimate and close to us than anything we can wear, are by no means to be spurned. These are not merely for man's adornment or convenience; they are part of his very nature. Hence, in former times, the funerals of the just were arranged, their obsequies celebrated, and their tombs prepared with reverent piety. While they themselves were still living, they gave their children directions regarding the burial or the transfer of their bodies, and we have it by the angel's testimony that Tobias earned God's favor for burying the dead.[1] Our Lord Himself, who was to rise on

6 Lucan, *Pharsalia* 8.819.

1 Cf. Tob. 2.9; 12.12ff.

the third day, commended and urged others to commend the good work of that pious woman who poured precious ointment over His feet in preparation for His burial.[2] The Gospel recalls with praise those devoted persons who received His Body with loving care when It was taken down from the cross and reverently saw to Its shrouding and burial.

These sacred authors do not mean to suggest that there is any sensibility left in corpses, but they do point out, in order to confirm belief in the Resurrection, that the bodies of the dead come within the care of God's providence, and that He looks with favor upon such works of piety. From those same writers we learn to our profit how rich can be the reward for the charity we practice toward those who are alive and conscious, since God takes into full account whatever respect and care we bestow upon the lifeless members of the human body.

Many other things, also, which the Patriarchs said concerning the transfer and interment of their bodies they meant to be taken in a prophetic sense. This, however, is not the place to discuss them at length, since what I have already said suffices for our present purpose.

On the other hand, if the privations of things necessary for the sustenance of life, such as food and clothing, entails severe hardship without breaking down, in good men, the virtues of patience and perseverance or destroying piety in the soul, but rather puts virtue to the test and enhances its fruitfulness, how much less will the absence of the customary trappings at funerals and burials cause any harm to those who already enjoy repose in the secret abodes of the just.

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2 Cf. Matt. 26.10, 13f.

Chapter 14

Again, it is complained, many Christians have been led into captivity. This would be lamentable, indeed, if they had been led to a place where they could not find their God. But, Holy Scripture gives us instances of great consolations bestowed even in such calamity. There were the three boys, Daniel, and other Prophets who suffered captivity, but in no case was God's comfort lacking.

In like manner, the same God who did not abandon the Prophet Jonas even in the belly of a monster did not desert His faithful ones in the power of a barbarous people, who were, at least, human.

Those with whom I am at issue will prefer to jest at, rather than to believe, these accounts; yet they will swallow the tale of Orion of Methymna, the celebrated harper, thrown overboard from a ship, then taken up on a dolphin's back and brought to shore. Our account of Jonas the Prophet is more incredible. It is more incredible because more wonderful. It is more wonderful because it reveals a greater power.

Chapter 15

Yet, our detractors have, in the person of one of their eminent men, a striking example of captivity willingly borne for religion's sake. Marcus Aurelius Regulus, a Roman general, was held in captivity by the Carthaginians. As they preferred to have their own men liberated from Roman bondage rather than to hold Romans in their prisons, they despatched to Rome no less a man than Regulus, accompanied by their own legates to negotiate the exchange. At the same time, they bound him under oath to return to Carthage, in case he failed to accomplish what they proposed. Regulus

set out on his mission, but, on reaching Rome, he persuaded the Senate not to accede, urging his view that the exchange of prisoners would not be to the advantage of the Roman republic. Having made his plea, he did not have to be compelled to return to the enemy. Of his own accord, Regulus kept the word he had sworn and returned to Carthage. There, Rome's enemies slew him, after subjecting him to fiendish torture. They packed him into a tight wooden box, spiked with sharp nails on all sides, so that he could not lean in any direction without being pierced. The agony of pain, together with privation of sleep, snuffed out his life. Deservedly, indeed, may one extol a courage that proved itself greater than such a frightful ordeal. He had sworn by those gods to return—the gods the banning of whose worship, if you believe the cavilers, brought this terrible disaster upon mankind. Yet, if those gods who were honored that they might make life prosperous here below willed or permitted a horrible fate to overtake one who scrupulously kept his oath, imagine what more frightful infliction they would, if angered, bring down upon the head of a perjured man.

Why do I not confirm my argument with a double proof? Regulus, no doubt, worshiped the gods so sincerely that to keep his oath inviolate he was absolutely resolved not to remain in his own country nor to betake himself anywhere except back into the hands of his bitterest enemies. On the one hand, if he regarded this obligation to the gods as profitable for his life on earth, which had so tragic an end, he was surely deluded. For, his example shows that the gods are utterly useless to secure temporal felicity for their worshipers. Devoted as Regulus was to their worship, he was, notwithstanding, led into captivity, and for being unwilling to violate the oath he swore to them he was slain by being put through

the agony of a newly-devised instrument of torture that for devilry has no precedent in the memory of man.

If, on the other hand, the worship of the gods bestows felicity as a reward in the life to come, why do the calumniators of Christian civilization affirm that disaster came upon Rome because she ceased to honor her deities? Honor them as devotedly as she might, could she have tasted the waters of bitterness to the extent that Regulus did? To deny this, one would have to be so incredibly blind as to fly in the face of the plain truth and to contend that the entire city could not taste misery if she worshiped the gods, but that one man could, or, in other words, that the power of their gods is more adapted to preserve a multitude than to preserve individuals. Yet, do not individuals make up the multitude? If they retort that, by reason of his strength of spirit, Marcus Regulus could have found happiness even in his captivity and amid those frightful torments, then I say to them: Go and look rather for the true strength of spirit that can bring happiness to the city also.

The happiness of a city and the happiness of individual men spring from the same source, since a city is nothing else than a multitude of men in harmonius association. I do not, therefore, discuss what kind of virtue inspired Regulus. It suffices, for the moment, that in view of his magnificent gesture the pagans are compelled to admit that the gods are honored not for material advantages or goods which are external and incidental to man. Regulus preferred to forego all such things rather than to offend the gods by whom he swore. But what are we to do with people who boast of having such a fellow citizen, but dread to have a whole city of like quality? If they have no such dread, then let them avow that the very evil which befell Regulus might befall

the city also, though it honor the gods no less conscientiously than he did. What is more, let them cease heaping calumny on the Christian era.

But, since this discussion started on the subject of Christian captives, let those who are impudent and stupid enough to mock the most consoling of all religions reflect on the example of Regulus and hold their peace. For, if it was no discredit to the gods that a most devoted servant of theirs who was faithful to his oath lost his native land and, in captivity among enemies, suffered a cruel and lingering death by a new-fangled instrument of torture, then there is far less cause to slander the profession of Christianity by reason of the imprisonment of its holy followers. For, while these martyrs looked forward with certain faith to a heavenly home, they still knew that they were but pilgrims even in their own country.

Chapter 16

The pagans fancy that they are throwing a colossal crime in the face of the Christians when they put their captivity in the worst light by charging further that rapes were wrought not only on married women and marriageable maidens, but also on consecrated virgins. Here, we are not to speak of faith, or piety, or strictly of the virtue we call chastity, but are to confine our discussion to the narrow limits of sense of shame and reason. I am not so much concerned to give an answer to strangers as to offer comfort to my fellow Christians. Therefore, let this stand as a firmly established truth: The virtue which governs a good life controls from the seat of the soul every member of the body, and the body is rendered holy by the act of a holy will.

Thus, as long as the will remains unyielding, no crime,

beyond the victim's power to prevent it without sin, and which is perpetrated on the body or in the body, lays any guilt on the soul. An attack on one's body may inflict not merely physical pain, but may also excite carnal pleasure. If such an act is perpetrated, it does not compromise the virtue of chastity, to which the sufferer clings with an iron will; it merely outrages the sense of shame. We must not consider as committed with the will what could not, by the very constitution of nature, occur without some fleshly satisfaction.

Chapter 17

Anyone with a sense of sympathy will make allowances for those unfortunate women who took their lives rather than submit to such dishonor. Yet, no person with sense will be scandalized at those who would not destroy themselves to prevent another's sin. To be sure, if no one may kill on his own authority even a guilty man—no law grants such a power to kill—then, even a person taking his own life is, of course, a homicide. He is the more guilty in killing himself, the less responsibility he had for the cause that prompted his suicide.

We justly abominate the crime of Judas, and He who is Truth Itself judges that Judas by hanging himself heightened rather than expiated that crime of dastardly betrayal—because by despairing of God's mercy he abandoned himself to an impenitent remorse and left no room in his soul for saving sorrow. Still, for how much greater reason must one who has nothing to expiate through such a self-imposed penalty desist from self-destruction? When Judas killed himself, he killed a guilty man. Yet, he went out of this life with the guilt not only of Christ's death but of his own upon his soul,

because, though he died for one crime, he also died by the commission of still another. Why, then, should a man, who has done no wrong, wrong himself, and by killing himself slay a guiltless man? In order to escape the attack of a guilty man, why should one commit on himself a sin of his own—merely that another might not commit it on him?

Chapter 18

But, one may fear to be polluted by another's lust. Such lust will not pollute, if it is another's lust; if it sullies us, then it is not another's. Since chastity is a virtue of the soul, and has as its companion fortitude, which is determined to undergo any evil rather than consent to wrong, and since, moreover, no man, be he ever so courageous and chaste, has it in his absolute power to protect his body physically, but only to consent or to resist with his will, what person of understanding will deem that one's own chastity is lost if somebody else satisfies his lust on a body that has been forcibly seized and outraged? For, if chastity is lost in that manner, then chastity certainly is not a virtue of the soul, nor can it be reckoned among those virtues which constitute a good life. Rather, it must be regarded as one of the physical endowments, such as strength, beauty, sound health, and the like, which, if diminished, in no way impair a good and righteous life. If chastity is no more than that, to what purpose should one strive to preserve it even at the body's peril?

If, on the other hand, it is a virtue of the soul, then it is not lost even though the body be outraged by force. In fact, so long as the virtue of holy continence does not yield to the impurity of carnal lust, the body itself is made holy thereby. Hence, while the intention not to yield to the assaulters stands firm, the body retains its purity because the will retains its

intention—and, so far as possible, the power—to use the body as a holy thing.

The body is not holy because its members are unimpaired, or because they are untouched, for they can through any accident suffer injury and violence, and oftentimes physicians, in the interest of health, resort to surgery that makes one shudder. Suppose a midwife, probing with her hand to ascertain a maiden's virginity, either through malice or ignorance, or by accident, injures the virginal membrane. I do not imagine that anyone would be so foolish as to think that the maiden lost any of her bodily sanctity because of this broken membrane. So long, therefore, as the will's resolution—the cause of the body's sanctity—stands firm, an impure attack by another person does not deprive the body of its sanctity. This is preserved by its unshakeable continence.

On the contrary, take the case of a woman whose mind is corrupted, who has broken the vows she swore to God, and surrenders to her seducer to be dishonored by him. Considering her at the moment when she is on her way to accomplish her purpose, can we say that her body is still holy now that her soul's holiness, on which that of her body depends, is utterly lost? Surely not. From this let us draw the lesson that the body's holiness is never lost while the soul retains its sanctity, even though the body is outraged; yet, the body's sanctity can be lost along with that of the soul, even though the body be untouched.

Thus, a woman has no reason to inflict death upon herself when, without consent on her part, she has been the victim of violence and the object of another's outrage. How much less reason to do so before the deed. Why should certain homicide be committed while the actual commission of a crime by another is still in doubt?

Chapter 19

I affirm, therefore, that in case of violent rape and of an unshaken intention not to yield unchaste consent, the crime is attributable only to the ravisher and not at all to the ravished. To my cogent argument to this effect, some may venture to take exception. Against these I maintain the truth that not only the souls of Christian women who have been forcibly violated during their captivity, but also their bodies, remain holy.

Many recall, with high praise for her chastity, the noble and ancient Roman matron, Lucretia. Upon her body, overpowered by brute force, the son of King Tarquin inflicted his lust. She revealed the crime of the villainous youth to her husband Collatinus and her kinsman Brutus, both brave and distinguished men, and bound them to avenge it. Then, becoming deeply despondent and unable to bear the shame of the foul deed perpetrated on her body, she killed herself. What judgment is to be passed on her? Is she to be regarded as an adulterous or a chaste woman? Who will cudgel his brains in trying to resolve the question? On this point someone has declared, admirably and with truth: 'Wonderful to relate! Two persons were involved, yet only one committed the adultery!' Nobly and truly said. Seeing, in this connection, only the foul passion of the one and the chaste will of the other, and regarding not so much the union of bodies as the opposition of wills, he declared: 'Two persons, but only one adulterer.'

But, what are we to say of the heavy penalty paid by her who did not commit adultery? The adulterer was driven out of the country with his father, but she bore the extreme penalty of death. If to be the unwilling victim of violent rape is no unchastity, the punishing of a chaste woman is not

justice. I appeal to you, laws and judges of Rome. After the commission of a crime, you have never wanted a criminal put to death without sentence of condemnation. If, therefore, anyone brought this crime before you for judgment and it were proved that the woman was slain not only unheard, but also chaste and innocent, would you not impose a duly severe penalty upon the perpetrator of such a deed?

This is the case of Lucretia. Yes, the much-lauded Lucretia took the life of the guiltless, chaste, coerced Lucretia. Pronounce your sentence. If you cannot, because the guilty party is not present in court, why do you shower so much praise on the slayer of a pure and innocent woman? In any case, you can in no way defend her before the judges of the lower regions; if they be of the kind of whom your poets sing, since she is to be placed among those

> . . . who guiltless spoiled themselves through black despite,
> And threw their souls to hell through hate of light.[1]

And, should she crave to return to the upper world, 'Justice and loveless fens forbid the passage thence.'[2] Could it be that she is not in the upper world because she slew herself, not without guilt, and with a bad conscience? What if—only she could know—notwithstanding the young villain's violent advances, she was lured by her own lust to acquiesce and, stung with self-reproach, chose death as the way of atonement? Not even then should she have made an end to herself, if she could possibly do penance acceptable to the false gods.

However, if such be the case, and if the verdict, 'two

1 Virgil, *Aeneid* 6.434-436.
2 *Ibid.* 6.438.

persons, but only one adulterer,' be false—the truth being that both committed adultery, one by open aggression and the other by secret agreement—then, she did not kill herself with a clean conscience. That being so, her learned champions cannot affirm that in the lower regions she is not ranged with those 'who guiltless spoiled themselves.' Thus, the case is pinned down by both horns of a dilemma: If the suicide is condoned, the adultery is clear; if the adultery is disproved, the suicide is doubly clear. There is no way out of the dilemma. If she is an adulteress, why all the praise? If chaste, why did she kill herself?

In connection with the noble example of Lucretia, and to refute those who are incapable of grasping the idea of sanctity and make sport of the Christian women forcibly violated in captivity, I need only repeat what was said in her praise: 'Two persons, but only one adulterer.' In their eyes, she could not have stained her name with an adulterous consent. The fact is that, though free from adulterous intent, she killed herself because she suffered an adulterer. She was not in love with chastity; she was a victim of her sense of shame. The act committed on her without her consent filled her with shame. Being a Roman with a passion for praise, she was afraid that, if she lived, men might think she did willingly what she had endured by violence. Hence, as witness of her intention, she decided to put that punishment before the eyes of men who could not read her conscience. She was ashamed to be thought a party to the deed if she bore with resignation the foul thing done to her by another.

It was not in this way that women acted who endured similar violation, yet are still alive. They did not avenge on themselves others' wrongs, lest they add sins of their own to the crimes of others. This they would have done had they murdered themselves for shame because lustful enemies had

made them victims of violence. They bear within them the glory of chastity, in the testimony of their conscience, and this they have in the eyes of their God. They ask for nothing more, since this is the best way not to depart from the authority of God's law by any ill-advised attempt to avoid the humiliation of human suspicion.

Chapter 20

It is significant that in Holy Scripture no passage can be found enjoining or permitting suicide either in order to hasten our entry into immortality or to void or avoid temporal evils. God's command, 'Thou shalt not kill,'[1] is to be taken as forbidding self-destruction, especially as it does not add 'thy neighbor,' as it does when it forbids false witness, 'Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.' However, no one should think he is guiltless when he bears false witness against himself, since the duty to love one's neighbor is measured by the love of oneself, as it is written, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.'[2]

To be sure, the commandment forbidding false witness has another directly in view, and by misunderstanding the matter some may judge that no one is obliged to be truthful to himself. But, the fact is that a man who lies against himself is no less guilty of false witness than if he lied against another. All the more must we realize that no man may take his own life, for, in the command, 'Thou shalt not kill,' there are no limitations; hence, no one, not even the one who is commanded, is to be excepted.

Indeed, some people try to stretch the prohibition to cover

1 Exod. 20.13,16.
2 Matt. 22.39.

beasts and cattle, and make it unlawful to kill any such animals. But, then, why not include plants and anything rooted in and feeding on the soil? After all, things like this, though devoid of feeling, are said to have life, and, therefore, can die, and so be killed by violent treatment. St. Paul himself, speaking of seeds, says, 'That which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die first,'[3] while the Psalmist writes: 'And he destroyed their vineyards with hail.'[4] Must we, then, when we read, 'Thou shalt not kill,' understand that it is a crime to pull up a shrub, and foolishly subscribe to the error of the Manichaeans?

Putting this nonsense aside, we do not apply 'Thou shalt not kill' to plants, because they have no sensation; or to irrational animals that fly, swim, walk, or creep, because they are linked to us by no association or common bond. By the Creator's wise ordinance they are meant for our use, dead or alive. It only remains for us to apply the commandment, 'Thou shalt not kill,' to man alone, oneself and others. And, of course, one who kills himself kills a man.

Chapter 21

The same divine law which forbids the killing of a human being allows certain exceptions, as when God authorizes killing by a general law or when He gives an explicit commission to an individual for a limited time. Since the agent of authority is but a sword in the hand, and is not responsible for the killing, it is in no way contrary to the commandment, 'Thou shalt not kill,' to wage war at God's bidding, or for the representatives of the State's authority to put criminals to death, according to law or the rule of rational justice.

3 1 Cor. 15.36.
4 Ps. 77.47.

Thus, Abraham was not only free from the guilt of criminal cruelty, but even commended for his piety, when he consented to sacrifice his son, not, indeed, with criminal intent but in obedience to God.[1] One may well ask, also, whether it was not at God's command that Jephte killed his daughter when she met him after he had vowed that he would sacrifice to God the first thing he encountered, if he returned victorious from battle.[2] Samson crushed himself and his enemies to death beneath the ruins of a building. He can only be excused on the grounds that the Spirit of the Lord, who wrought miracles through him, had bidden him to do so. But, apart from such men excepted by the command of a just law in general or of God, the very Source of justice, in a special case, anyone who kills a human being, himself or another, is guilty of murder.

Chapter 22

Those who have put an end to themselves may possibly impress people with their courage, but are not to be commended for sound judgment. If you consider the matter rationally, courage is scarcely the right word to use when a man does away with himself because he is unable to endure adversity or the misdeeds of others. Surely, we should call it cowardice when a man is not brave enough to bear up when his body is in chains or when he has to face the folly of public opinion. There is more courage in a man who faces rather than flees the storms of life, and who holds cheap the opinion of men, especially that of the rabble. For, what is public opinion but a cloud of error, compared with the light and purity of one's conscience.

1 Gen. 22.1-13.
2 Judges 11, 30-39.

If taking one's own life is to be regarded as greatness of soul, then this greatness was surely found in Cleombrotus.[1] He is said to have read Plato's book on the immortality of the soul and then to have thrown himself headlong from a wall to pass on to what he thought was a better life. He was not driven to self-destruction by calamity or guilt, true or imagined, which he had not the courage to face. It was greatness of spirit alone that prompted him to rush at death and thus sever the sweet links that bound him to this life. But, the Plato whom he read could have told him that the action was not good, whatever its greatness. Plato would have been the first to commit suicide, or even prescribe it, had not that same mind which saw that the soul was immortal seen that suicide was wrong and ought to be forbidden.

It will be objected that many men have taken their lives in order not to fall into the hands of their enemies. Here, we are not inquiring whether this was so, but whether it was right. Sound reason should come before examples and examples should be rooted in reason, as is the case with the great saints who are especially worthy of imitation. Neither the Patriarchs nor the Prophets nor the Apostles offer any instance of suicide. Christ the Lord Himself, who instructed them to flee from city to city[2] if persecuted, could have bidden them to do away with themselves in order not to fall into the persecutors' hands. On the contrary, He neither bade nor counseled even those to pass out of life for whom He promised to prepare eternal mansions after their passage from earth. So, let the pagans who know not God bring forward whatever examples they will. One thing is clear: Suicide is a sin for those who worship the one true God.

1 The MSS. read Theobrotus, a mistake for Cleombrotus. For Cleombrotus, cf. Cicero, *Tusc. disput.* I 34.84.
2 Matt. 10.23.

Chapter 23

Apart from Lucretia, about whom I expressed my views above, the pagan champions of suicide find it hard to single out anyone whose authority they can set up as a norm, except the celebrated Cato who killed himself at Utica.[1] He is not the only example of suicide, but, as a learned and virtuous man, what he did might be regarded as having been right for him and not right for others. Of Cato's action I must say, in the first place, that his own friends, some of them learned, very wisely tried to dissuade him from his action, and judged it to be the action of a cowardly rather than of a brave spirit. For them, it was not an exhibition of virtue forearming against wickedness, but a craven spirit flinching before the frowns of fortune. In fact, Cato judged himself by the advice he gave to his own beloved son.[2] For, if it was infamy to live under a victorious Caesar, why did the father lead the son on to such a disgrace by bidding him to place all his hopes in Caesar's liberality? Why did he not compel his son to die along with himself? If Torquatus gained applause by putting to death a gallant son who had engaged the enemy against his orders and won, why did vanquished Cato spare his vanquished son, but not himself? Was it more shameful to be a victor contrary to orders than to submit to a victor contrary to honor?

Thus, Cato deemed it no disgrace to live under the victorious Caesar; otherwise, he would have delivered his son from that disgrace by his own sword. What else, then, remains to be said but that Cato loved his son, whom he both hoped and desired Caesar would spare, as much as he begrudged

1 Dio Cassius, *Hist. Rom.* 42.10-13; Plutarch, *Cato Minor,* 65-70.
2 Dio Cassius, *Hist. Rom.* 43.10.

Caesar the glory of pardoning him—as Caesar is reported to have said himself[3]—or, to use a milder term, he was ashamed of such a courtesy at Caesar's hands.

Chapter 24

Those against whom I am writing take it amiss that I esteem Cato less than the saintly man Job, who preferred to endure incredible afflictions in his body rather than to rid himself of them by suicide. I also honor other holy men of whom it is related, on the authority of our reliable books, that they submitted to captivity and the tyranny of their enemies rather than to take their own lives. But, even on the authority of my opponents' books, I should place Regulus above M. Cato. After all, Cato never defeated Caesar; when he himself was defeated, he disdained to submit to the victor, and to avoid subjection he decided to do away with himself. Regulus, on the other hand, had once routed the Carthaginians, and, as commander of the Roman forces, gained, not a victory over his fellow citizens to be lamented, but a victory over the enemy to be celebrated by the Roman republic. But, when he later fell into their hands, he preferred captivity to suicide. As a result, Regulus preserved with honor both his power of endurance under the Carthaginians and the admiration of his constancy in the hearts of the Romans, and thus left his conquered body with the enemy and his indomitable spirit with his fellow citizens. Nor was his refusal to do away with himself prompted by his inordinate love of life. Of this he gave ample proof when, in virtue of the oath he had sworn to his enemies, he returned to them without the slightest

3 Plutarch, *Cato Minor*, 72; *Julius Caesar* 54.

hesitation, after he had done more harm by his words in the Senate than he had done by arms in battle.

Hence, his contempt for this life, shown by preferring to let cruel enemies end his life by torture rather than to take it by his own hand, is beyond doubt to be taken as his reasoned conviction that suicide is a great crime. In the galaxy of their most celebrated men distinguished for virtue, the Romans can proudly point to no greater man than Regulus—a man whom no prosperity corrupted, for he remained poor despite his great victory, and whom no adversity broke, for he returned to incredible torments with resolute and undaunted spirit.

These eminently brave and notable men, who had only an earthly fatherland to protect and who, indeed, worshiped false gods—but with sincerity, scrupulously observing the oaths sworn to them—had the right by the laws of war to put their conquered foes to the sword. Nevertheless, they refused to put themselves to the sword in the event of defeat. Though they had no fear of death, they preferred to submit to arrogant victors rather than take their own life. If those men did so, with how much greater reason should Christians, who adore the true God and have their hopes fixed on a heavenly fatherland, recoil from that crime, even though Divine Providence should bring them under the enemy's heel for a time—to test their virtue or to reform their ways. The Most High never abandons His followers in their distress. He deigned to come down to earth in humble estate for their sake, especially as He knew that they are bound by no law of war or the orders of any military power to put a vanquished foe to the sword. What error, therefore, so insidious has ever stolen into men's mind as to imagine that a man may take his life because an enemy has wronged him or might

wrong him. A Christian may not even put to death the enemy himself who has done, or intends to do, him mischief.

Chapter 25

But, it is objected, there is ground to fear that, when the body is forcibly subjected to the enemy's lust, the will may be insidiously induced by pleasure to yield consent to sin. Hence, they say, to ward off such sin one is justified in committing suicide, not so much to thwart the enemy's sin as one's own. To this I answer that the soul that is subject to God and His wisdom, rather than a slave to bodily pleasure, will by no means give consent to carnal desire when that is aroused by another's lust. But if it be true—and the truth is obvious—that self-destruction is an abominable and damnable crime, who is so foolish as to say: 'Let us sin now, lest we sin later. Let us commit murder now, that we may not later, perhaps, commit adultery.' If wickedness has such control that sin is chosen instead of purity, is not a future and uncertain adultery preferable to a present and certain murder?

Is it not preferable to perform a bad act which may be expiated by penance rather than do a wrong that will leave no room for repentance? I have said this for the sake of those men or women who think that they should do mortal violence to themselves in order to avoid a sin; not another's, but their own possible sin of consenting to a pleasure provoked by another's lust. God forbid that any Christian who puts his trust in God and firmly relies on His aid should give sinful consent to fleshly desires, however aroused. If that rebellious concupiscence which still clings to our mortal flesh follows, as it were, a law of its own independent of the law of our will, its stirrings in the body of one who gives no consent are surely as free from fault as its stirrings in the body of one who is asleep.

Chapter 26

Again, we are told that in time of persecution certain holy women, in order to escape the pursuers who threatened their virtue, threw themselves into a river that they knew would bear them away, and so met their end; in the Catholic Church, their tombs are venerated like those of martyrs. Regarding these women I will not venture to pronounce hasty judgment. Whether, on the strength of certain thoroughly reliable testimony, divine authority inspired the Church thus to honor their memory, I cannot say. It may be so. For, what if those holy women acted, not through human deception, but at God's bidding; not in error, but under obedience? In the case of Samson, we must believe that this was so.

When God commands and makes His command known beyond doubt, who can call obedience an offence? Who will reproach such pious homage paid to God? But, no one who decides to sacrifice a son to God is free from guilt, just because Abraham did so and was commended for it. When a soldier kills a man in obedience to the authority under which he is lawfully commissioned, no law of his country holds him guilty of murder. In fact, unless he does it, he is guilty of desertion and disobedience. On the other hand, if he killed on his own impulse and authority, he would have incurred the guilt of murder. The same law which punishes him if he acts without orders will punish him unless he obeys orders.

This is one's duty when a general commands; it is much more so when God commands! Hence, one who knows that he is forbidden to kill himself may yet do so if he is ordered by one whose orders he dare not disobey. Only, let him make certain that there is no doubt about the divine command. What goes on in one's conscience we know only from its manifestations; we presume not to judge its secrets that remain

hidden.[1] 'For what man knoweth the things of a man but the spirit of a man that is in him?' This we declare and affirm and emphatically accept as true: No man may inflict death upon himself at will merely to escape from temporal difficulties—for this is but to plunge into those which are everlasting; no man may do so even on account of another's sins, fearing they may lead to a sin of one's own—for we are not sullied by others' sins; no man may do so on account of past sins—for to expiate them by penance we need life all the more; no one may end his own life out of a desire to attain a better life which he hopes for after death, because a better life after death is not for those who perish by their own hand.

Chapter 27

There remains one argument for suicide, which I have touched on already. It is to the effect that taking one's own life is expedient in order to ward off falling into sin, either through the allurements of pleasure or the violence of pain. If we admit this argument, it will logically lead us to the fantastic conclusion that men should prefer to end their lives as soon as they have been cleansed by the 'laver of regeneration,'[1] and have received pardon for all their sins. That is the proper moment for averting all future sins, when all past sins are blotted out.

For, if self-inflicted death be morally right, why should not that moment be chosen above all others? Why should any baptized man hesitate to end his life? Why should a liberated spirit enmesh itself again in the manifold hazards of this life, when it is the easiest thing in the world for him to stave off everything by snuffing out his life? It is written: 'He that

1 1 Cor. 2.11.

1 Titus 3.5.

loveth danger shall perish in it.'[2] Why, then, does a man love so many grave dangers, or, if he does not love them, at least lay himself open to them by clinging to a life which he may lawfully cast off? But, what insensate folly has so perverted the heart and blinded it to the truth that a man should fancy that, though he must kill himself lest he be forced into sin by one enemy who has overpowered him, he ought to keep on living, and enduring a world, constantly beset with temptations—which come not only from one master, but from the whole of life. Why waste time in those exhortations we address to the newly-baptized, striving to enkindle in them a love for virginal purity, or widowed continence, or conjugal fidelity? We have simpler short-cuts for avoiding all danger of sin: we can urge everyone, the moment he is cleansed of his sins at the baptismal font, to rush himself off to death. In that way, do we not dispatch him to the Lord sounder and purer?

Now, if there be anyone who thinks that such an exhortation should be attempted, I say he is not merely silly, he is mad. After all, with what force could he say to a man, 'Kill yourself, lest to your slight sins you add a mortal one by living subject to a barbarous and impure master,' when, except he cast decency to the winds, he cannot say, 'Kill yourself the moment your sins are absolved, lest you commit like and worse sins while you live in a world alluring with filthy pleasures, mad with unspeakable cruelty, arrayed against you with errors and terrors'? Since it is wicked to speak thus, it is undoubtedly wicked to kill onself. For, if there could be any justifiable occasion for suicide, there would certainly be none more justifiable than this. Since this is not so, then there is none at all.

2 Eccli. 3.27.

Chapter 28

Let not your life, then, O faithful followers of Christ be a burden to you in case your chastity was made the sport of enemies. You have ample and genuine assurance on that point so long as your conscience assures you that you gave no consent to the sins of those who were allowed the liberty of committng them against you. If you ask me why they were allowed the liberty, the answer is that the providence of the Creator and Ruler of the world transcends human reckoning, and that 'incomprehensible are His judgments and . . . unsearchable His ways.'[1] Nevertheless, carefully scrutinize your own souls and see whether you were not unduly puffed up about your virtue of purity, or continence, or chastity, and whether you have not been led to envy others by reason of the human praise bestowed on them for these virtues.

I make no accusation about what I do not know, nor do I hear what answer your consciences make to the questions you ask. But, if they reply that the case is as I have supposed it might be, then do not wonder that you have lost that chastity which you displayed to win men's praises and retained that love of chastity which cannot be displayed before men's eyes. If you did not yield consent to the sin of your oppressors, it was because God's grace came to your aid that you might not lose it, whereas shame before men followed the praise of men in order that your heart might not pour itself out on this. In either case you may find solace, faint-hearted ones, tested as you have been by the one experience, and chastened by the other.

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1 Rom. 11.33.

Then, there are those faithful women whose consciences, when interrogated, reply that they have never been puffed up with pride by reason of their virginity or continence or conjugal chastity, but that 'consenting to the humble,'[2] that is, in a spirit of humility, they rejoiced with fear and trembling in the gift of God and envied no one who enjoyed the treasure of like holiness and chastity. Far from that, they held in little regard that human praise which, as a rule, is lavished in greater measure the rarer the virtue that elicits the applause. They desired that the number of the pure should increase rather than that they themselves should stand out as more conspicuous among the few. Even those virtuous women who are both chaste and unenvious, if they have been outraged by the barbarians, must not complain that this was allowed; nor must they think that God is indifferent to such outrages because He permits to happen what no man can commit without punishment.

For, like an avalanche, some evil desires are let loose by the secret judgment of God on earth, and are reserved for His final and open judgment. Moreover, as regards those Christian women whose conscience assures them that they were not puffed up by their virtue of chastity, and who, nevertheless, had suffered the enemy's outrages in their flesh, it may possibly be that they had in them some latent weakness which could have swollen to overwhelming pride had they escaped this humiliation in the sack of the city. Hence, just as death snatched some away, 'lest wickedness should alter their understanding,'[3] so violence snatched something away from them lest prosperity should endanger their chastity.

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2 Rom. 12.16.
3 Wisd. 4.11.

Hence, neither the women who were already puffed up because they had suffered no immodest contact, nor those who might possibly have been puffed up had not contact been forced on them by the enemy, were robbed of their chastity, but they learned humility. The former were delivered from a pride that had already overtaken them; the latter, from a pride that threatened them.

There is yet another point I should not fail to mention. Some who suffered violence to their chastity might conceive of this virtue as belonging to these qualities of the body which endure so long as the body remains inviolate. Others might think that sanctity of body and soul does not depend solely on strength of will sustained by God's help. Still others might conclude that it is not a blessing which cannot be taken away from a person against his will. From such an error they are probably now delivered. For, when they reflect on how conscientiously they have served God, and when with unshaken faith they believe that He would by no means abandon those who have served Him and invoked His aid so faithfully, and when they further consider how pleasing is chastity in His sight, then they can draw only one conclusion: that He would never have permitted these evils if they could destroy in His saints that purity of soul which He had bestowed on them and delights to see in them.

Chapter 29

Hence, every servant of the most high and true God has a comfort all his own, which is not an illusory assurance resting on the hope of mutable and fleeting things. He has also earthly life itself, which he may live without regret, for it is a school training him for life eternal, a school in which he learns to use temporal goods in the spirit of a pilgrim

refusing to be enslaved by them, and in which his strength is put to the proof or his character purified by the crosses he has to bear. There are some who deride the probity of Christ's followers and, when some temporal calamity happens to befall them, ask mockingly, 'Where is their God'?[1] Let them, when they are in similar distress, tell us where their own gods are. For, it is in order to escape that very distress that they worship the gods and insist that they should be worshiped.

Every member of the Christian family can answer: 'My God is everywhere present; He is all everywhere, and nowhere confined by space; He can be present without being visible, and absent without moving. Whenever He visits me with misfortune, it is either to prove my merit or to punish my sins, and for the temporal evils I have borne with holy resignation He lays up for me an eternal reward. But, pray, who are you that I should parley with you, especially about your gods, and much less about my God, who is to be feared above all gods. For all the gods of the Gentiles are devils: but the Lord made the heavens.'[2]

Chapter 30

Were your former and famous pontifex, Scipio Nasica, still alive—the man whom, amid the panic of the Punic War, the Senate chose with one voice as the Roman citizen best fitted to welcome to Rome the obscene rites of the Phrygian goddess Cybele—he would have obliged you to desist from your impudent decision, and you would not even dare to look him in the face. Why, then, now that disaster has laid

1 Ps. 78.10.
2 Ps. 95.4, 5.

a heavy hand on you, do you complain about Christian civilization, if it be not that you desire to wallow securely in voluptuousness and, free from all restraint, give free rein to your profligate conduct? For, you do not desire to have peace and abundance of all things, in order to use these goods like decent men, that is, with measure, sobriety, temperance, and piety. No, your purpose is rather to pursue every kind of pleasure with insane extravagance; thus, out of your prosperity, you conjure up that corruption of morals which is more deadly than the fury of your enemies.

But that great man of yours, the chief pontifex, Scipio, that man whom the whole Senate judged your best citizen, fearing that that very calamity befall you, refused to consent to the destruction of Carthage, then challenging Rome's bid for power. He stood out against Cato, who was all for it. For, Scipio feared complacent security as the enemy of feeble spirits, and believed that a vigilant fear would be a better, and a badly needed, teacher for the Romans. He was not mistaken; the event proved how rightly he spoke. Carthage was, indeed, destroyed, and the panic fear that haunted the Roman republic was dispelled. But, a ghastly strain of disastrous calamities speedily followed these palmy days. Peace was undermined and shattered—first by savage and bloody strife, then by a concurrence of evil forces that broke out into civil wars, with their horrible massacres and bloodshed, and raging mania for proscriptions and plunder, so much so that those Romans who in more virtuous days feared harm only from their enemies, now that those days had become degenerate, had to endure greater misery from their fellow citizens. That very lust for power which among human vices obsessed the Roman people more completely than any other,

once it took possession of a few men of exceptional power also made slaves of the rest of them, now a demoralized and weary horde.

Chapter 31

For, once rooted in those arrogant spirits, would that passion for rule check its career before it climbed the whole ladder of public office to dynastic power? But, it would not be possible for one to perpetuate himself in power were it not for the prevalence of illicit favoritism, nor would such favoritism have any chance to prevail except among a people corrupted by greed and lust. For, a greedy and lustful people is what issued from that degrading prosperity which the famous Nasica, with sure foresight, sought to avert when he opposed the annihilation of the vast, mighty, and rich enemy state. This he did that fear might hold in check sensuality, which, thus restrained, might not itself degenerate into debauchery; and, with debauchery curbed, an end might be made of avarice. If these vices were banished, Nasica rightly thought, virtue would flourish and grow to the profit of the State, and a measure of freedom befitting virtue would be an abiding reward.

It was for those very reasons and because of his far-seeing patriotism that the same chief priest—I cannot repeat too often that he was unanimously acclaimed by the Senate of his time as the worthiest citizen—gave cold reception to the project of the Senate to build an amphitheatre, and in a very earnest, emphatic, and impressive speech repressed their enthusiasm for the scheme and convinced them that they should not suffer the licentious ways of the Greeks to contaminate the sturdier life of their country, or tolerate foreign depravity to undermine and enervate Roman character. He

spoke with such force and effect that his words stirred the Senators' foresight to action, and they henceforth forbade the laying out even of those movable seats which the public had already begun to use.

With how much zeal would a man like Nasica have kept the stage plays themselves far from Rome, if he had dared defy the authority of those he regarded as gods. But, he either did not know that those deities were mischievous demons, or, if he did, he imagined that they should be propitiated rather than condemned. Not yet had that heaven-sent teaching been proclaimed to the nations, that teaching which purified the heart by faith, inspired human desire to seek eagerly for things heavenly and divine, and emancipated it from the domination of arrogant demons.

Chapter 32

Learn, then, you who pretend ignorance, and mark well the facts while you grumble against the One who delivered you from such masters. The stage plays, those exhibitions of depravity and unbounded license, were not introduced in Rome by men's vices, but by the command of your gods. Far more justifiably might you have paid divine honors to your Scipio than worshiped gods such as those, for they were not more virtuous than their high priest. And now mark further, if your mind, besotted as it is with long draughts of error, is still able to entertain a sane thought. Your gods, in order to allay a plague that seized upon your bodies, ordered stage plays in their honor, but your pontifex forbade the construction of the stage in order to keep a plague from seizing your souls. If your mind retains enough sense to esteem the soul more than the body, then choose whom you should worship.

Moreover, the plague did not abate when the wanton madness of the stage plays took possession of a warlike people, once accustomed only to the sports of the arena. It was the work of wicked spirits crafty enough to know that that pestilence would soon run its course. They seized the occasion, to their great delight, to inject a more deadly contagion, not into men's bodies, but into their souls. This contagion so beclouded the wits of those wretches, so befouled and deranged them, that even now—for, future generations will scarcely believe the story if it reaches them—after the City of Rome has been laid waste, those who were so infected by the plague and were able to flee from Rome to Carthage were day after day stampeding one another in a mad rush after the clowns in the theatres.

Chapter 33

Are your minds bereft of reason? You are not merely mistaken; this is madness. Here are people in the East bewailing Rome's humiliation, and great states in remote regions of the earth holding public mourning and lamentation—and you Romans are searching for theaters, pouring into them, filling them, behaving more irresponsibly than ever before. It is this spiritual disease, degeneration, decline into immorality and indecency that Scipio feared when he opposed the erection of theaters. He saw how easily ease and plenty would soften and ruin you. He did not wish you to be free from fear.

He did not think that the republic could be happy while walls were standing, yet morals were collapsing. But, you were more attached to the seductions of foul spirits than to the wisdom of men with foresight. That is why you take no blame for the evil you do, but blame Christianity for the

evil you suffer. Depraved by prosperity and unchastened by adversity, you desire, in your security, not the peace of the State but liberty for license. Scipio wanted you to have a salutary fear of the enemy, lest you should rot in debauchery. Though crushed by the enemy, you put no check on immorality, you learned no lessons from calamity; in the depths of sorrows you still wallow in sin.

Chapter 34

Yet, you owe your survival to that God who, in sparing you, warned you to amend your lives by penance. Despite your ingratitude, He made it possible for you to escape from the hands of the enemy—either by professing to be His followers or by taking refuge in the churches of the martyrs.

Romulus and Remus, we are told, with a view to increasing the population of their city, opened an asylum where refugees were to be immune from every molestation. That admirable example redounded to the honor of Christ. The destroyers of the city re-established the institution of its founders. But, what is remarkable is that what the founders did to increase the number of their citizens the destroyers did to save a number of their enemies.

Chapter 35

This—or something fuller and fitter, if it can be found—is the core of the reply that the redeemed followers of Christ the Lord and the pilgrim City of Christ the King should give to their enemies. But, our city must remember that, in the ranks of its enemies, lie hid fellow citizens to be, and that it is well to bear with them as enemies until we can reach them in their profession of faith. In like manner, the City of God

itself, so long as it is a wayfarer on earth, harbors within its ranks a number of those who, though externally associated in the common bond of the sacraments, will not be associated in the eternal felicity of the saints. Some there are who, covertly or overtly, join the enemy in abusing the God whom they have promised to serve. They are to be seen flocking sometimes to the theatres with the godless, and at other times to the churches with us.

There is little reason to abandon hope of reclaiming some of these persons, for among our most notorious adversaries are men destined to be friends, however little they know it. On earth, these two cities are linked and fused together, only to be separated at the Last Judgment. And now, with God's help, I must turn to what I think ought to be said about the origin, progress, and respective destinations of the two cities, in order to exalt the glory of the City of God, which by contrast with other cities will gleam the more brightly.

Chapter 36

I still have something to say against those who hold our religion responsible for the disaster to the Roman state, because it has forbidden them to sacrifice to their gods. Here, I must remind you of all the grave calamities which have occurred (or of as many as will suffice for my purpose), and which the city itself, or the provinces subject to its rule, had to endure long before their sacrifices were banned. For, beyond all doubt, they would have laid at our door all of those miseries, if at that time our religion had enlightened their minds, and had forbidden their sacrilegious rites.

Then, I must show on account of what virtues and for what reason the true God, in whose power are all kingdoms, vouchsafed His help to spread the empire, while those fictions

they call gods gave no help at all, but, on the contrary, worked untold harm by their deceptions and frauds. Lastly, I shall argue against those who, though the ground is taken from under their feet by the plainest possible proofs, attempt to maintain that the gods are to be worshiped, not for the benefit they could bestow in this life, but for the sake of the life beyond the grave. The discussion of this question is, I believe, a much more difficult task, calling for more subtle reasoning. For, on this point, we are at issue, not with the common run of philosophers, but with those who stand very high in the esteem of our adversaries and who see eye to eye with us on many things, such as the immortality of the soul, the creation of the world by the true God, and His providence governing the world He created.[1] Since these same philosophers must be set right on those points in which they differ with us, we cannot evade the duty of pointing out their errors, so that, after disposing of the objections of the impious, with the ability God will vouchsafe, we may vindicate the City of God, and the true piety toward and worship of that God who alone holds out the infallible promise of eternal happiness. Here, we may bring the present book to a close, and begin to take up the points next in order in a new book.

1 An allusion to Platonists and Neo-platonists.

BOOK II

Chapter 1

IF MAN'S sickly understanding would not set plain truth at defiance, but humbly submit this common infirmity to the tonic of wholesome doctrine until, by filial trust in God's help, it regained its strength, those who think straight and express their thoughts in well-chosen speech would have no need of many words to correct the errors of baseless assumption. Unfortunately, however, there prevails a major and malignant malady of fools, the victims of which mistake their irrational impulses for truth and reason, even when confronted with as much evidence as any man has a right to expect from another. It may be an excess of blindness which prevents them from seeing the most glaring facts, or a perverse obstinacy which prevents them from accepting the facts when seen. This compels me to present more diffusely, not for their closed eyes to see, but, so to speak, for their hands to touch and feel, some obvious points.

Yet, if we always felt obliged to reply to counterstatements, when would there be an end to the argument or a limit to discussion? For, those who cannot grasp what is said, or, if they understand the truth, are too obdurate to accept it, keep on replying and, according to Holy Writ, 'speak iniquity'[1] and never weary of empty words. You can easily see what an endless, wearisome, and fruitless task it would be, if I were

1 Ps. 93.4.

to refute all the unconsidered objections of people who pigheadedly contradict everything I say.

And so, my dear Marcellinus, I hope that neither you nor any others,[2] for whose profit and pleasure this work is offered in the love of Christ, will read what I write in the spirit of men who demand an answer every time they hear any objections and act like those silly women whom St. Paul describes as 'ever learning and never attaining to the knowledge of the truth.'[3]

Chapter 2

When I began in the previous Book to speak of the City of God—which moved me to undertake, with God's help, this entire work—my first plan was to challenge the view of those who hold that the Christian religion is responsible for all the wars desolating this miserable world and, in particular, for the recent barbarian sack of the City of Rome.[1] It is true that the Christian religion forbids pagans to honor demons with unspeakable sacrifices; but, as I pointed out, they should thank Christ for the boon that, out of regard for His Name and in disregard of the traditional usages of war, the barbarians gave them immunity in spacious Christian buildings. What is more, they treated both the genuine followers of Christ and many who through fear pretended to be such with great concern. They refused to take measures against them which the laws of war permitted.

2 This is the same Marcellinus mentioned in the Preface to Book I; among the 'others,' St. Augustine no doubt included the pagan Volusianus, the pro-consul of Africa, whose conversion to Christianity was so close to the heart of Marcellinus.

3 2 Tim. 3.7.

1 By Alaric in A.D. 410.

Thence arose the question: Why did God, on the one hand, bestow His good things upon the impious and the thankless, while, on the other, the enemy's hard blows fell with equal weight upon the good and the wicked alike? In order to answer this all-embracing question as fully as the scope of my work demanded, I lingered on it for various reasons. First, because many are disturbed in mind when they observe how, in the daily round of life, God's gifts and man's brutalities oftentimes fall indifferently and indiscriminately to the lot of both the good and the bad; but, above all, because I wanted to offer to those pure and holy women whose modesty had been outraged by the barbarian soldiery, but whose purity of soul had stood adamant, the consoling assurance that they have no reason to bewail their lives, since there is no personal guilt for them to bewail.

Then, I proceeded to address a few remarks to those who shamelessly seek to defame Christian victims of calamity, and especially the virtue of outraged women who have remained undefiled and saintly. These calumniators, I pointed out, are wicked, impious, and degenerate descendants—not to say, the worst enemies—of those sturdier Romans whose many noble deeds are on the lips of men and live in the pages of history. The Rome founded and made great by the toil of their ancestors these men made even lower while it was still standing than when it fell. In the sack by the enemy only its stones and timbers fell, but in the lives of these despicable creatures everything collapsed, not merely the ramparts and armaments of their walls, but likewise of their wills. The fire of their base passions burned more fiercely in their hearts than the flames that devoured the city's roofs.

With these observations, I brought the first Book to a

close. Now, I propose to speak of the calamities that befell the city from the beginning of its history, both at home and in its provinces—all of which our calumniators would have attributed to the Christian religion, if at that time the Gospel teaching had been freely bearing witness against their false and deceiving gods.

Chapter 3

Bear in mind that, in recounting these things, I am still dealing with those ignorant dupes who gave birth and popular currency to the saying: 'If there is a drought, blame the Christians.' As for those among them who have received a liberal education and appreciate the value of history, they can very easily inform themselves. In order to arouse popular hatred against us, they pretend ignorance and strive to instill into people's minds the common notion that the misfortunes which afflict the human race are due to the expansion of Christianity and to the eclipse of the pagan gods by the bright glory of its reputation and renown.

Let them, therefore, recall with me the calamities which so often and in so many ways set back the prosperity of Rome, and remember, too, that all this happened long before Christ came in the flesh, long before His Name shone before men with that glory which they vainly begrudge Him. In the face of those disasters, let them defend their gods if they can, remembering that they were worshiped precisely to prevent the evils recorded. Yet, if any of those evils befall them now, we Christians must bear the blame. Why, then, did the gods permit the misfortunes I shall mention to fall on their devotees before the promulgation of Christ's teaching provoked their wrath and proscribed their sacrifices?

Chapter 4

In the first place, why were the gods so negligent as to allow the morals of their worshipers to sink to so low a depth? The true God leaves those who do not worship Him to their own devices, but why did not those gods (whose worship, so thankless men complain, is forbidden) lay down moral precepts that would help their devotees to lead a decent life? They should have had as much concern for their worshipers' conduct as these had for their cult. But, some one will reply, each man is bad by his own will. No one ever denied this! Nevertheless, it was incumbent on protecting deities, not to conceal from their worshipers the laws of a good life, but to proclaim such laws from the housetops. It was for them to seek out and call sinners to task through the medium of prophets whose duty it was to threaten evil-doers with the punishment awaiting them, and to hold out the promise of reward for virtuous living.

Who ever heard such a thing proclaimed, fearlessly and authoritatively, in the temples of the gods? I myself, in my younger days, used to frequent the sacrilegious stage plays and comedies. I used to watch the demoniacal fanatics and listen to the choruses, and take delight in the obscene shows in honor of their gods and goddesses, of the virgin Caelestis and the Berecynthian Cybele, mother of the gods. Before the latter's couch on the day of her solemn bathing, ribald refrains were publicly sung about her by lewd actors that were unfit for the ear of the mother of the gods, and of the mother of any Senator or decent man—so unspeakably bestial, in fact, that even the mothers of the players themselves would have been ashamed to listen. For, there is in human modesty an inborn respect for parents which wickedness itself cannot efface.

Surely, the comedians themselves would have blushed to rehearse at home before their mothers the obscene words and actions which they uttered and performed in public before the mother of the gods and in the presence of a vast assemblage of both sexes. If curiosity could entice such numbers to come, a shocked sense of decency surely should have hurried them home. If these enormities are religious service, what can sacrilege be? If that bathing is purification, what is pollution? And these were called dishes, or 'courses,' as though a banquet were being celebrated at which the unclean demons were regaled with their favorite tidbits. If any one does not realize what kind of spirits find pleasure in such obscenities, then he is either unaware that there are unclean spirits wearing the deceptive masks of gods, or else he is leading the sort of life that prefers the demons, rather than the true God, as gracious masters and angry foes.

Chapter 5

To evaluate my judgment on this matter, I shall appeal to men who loathe, not to those who seek pleasure in, these depraved customs. I appeal to Scipio Nasica, who was formally elected by the Senate as the best citizen, and in whose hands the idol of the demon Cybele was received and carried into the city.[1] He would tell us whether he would wish his mother to have deserved so well of the State as to have divine honors decreed to her such as the Greeks and Romans and other peoples are known to have decreed to certain mortals whose good services to them they highly valued, and whom they be-

1 P. Cornelius Scipio Nasica was chosen as 'best citizen' in 204 B.C. and went to Ostia to receive the statue of the Phrygian goddess Cybele, sent to Rome to deliver the city during the Second Punic War (218-202).

lieved to have attained immortality and to have been received into the ranks of the gods. We may be sure that Scipio could not but wish such good fortune to his mother, if at all attainable.

Moreover, if I were further to ask Scipio whether he would be pleased to see those vile indecencies given in honor of his mother, would he not cry out in protest that he would sooner see his mother in her grave than have her live to hear with pleasure those outrageous things? God forbid that a Senator of the Roman people, who forbade the erection of theatres in the city of a virile nation, should bear to have his mother worshiped as a goddess with pantomime rites such as she or any honorable woman would blush to see or hear. How could he be brought to believe that that admirable woman's sense of modesty could be so distorted by divinity that she would suffer her devotees to invoke her with rites so ribald and coarse. Indeed, if she heard such filthy banter hurled at any one, her kinsmen, husband, and children would be thoroughly ashamed if she did not shut her eyes and leave the room.

It was such a mother of the gods as even the vilest human being would be ashamed to own as his own mother, who, in her attempt to captivate the hearts of the Romans, sought after the best man. It was not, indeed, to make him a good man by her counsel and help, but to deceive him by fraud—like the one of whom it is written: 'The woman catcheth the precious soul of a man.'[2] The aim of this deception was that the high-minded spirit, inflated by seemingly divine testimony, and esteeming himself in reality the best, would strive no more for that true piety and religion without which any genius, however laudable, evaporates in pride and comes to

2 Prov. 6.26.

nothing. How else but with deceptive purpose would that goddess seek the best man, since she desires such bawdiness in her worship as decent men shrink from even in their cups?

Chapter 6

This malevolence accounts for the fact that these deities had no concern for the life and morals of the states and peoples that worshiped them. With what result? They failed to restrain their believers by any fear-inspiring prohibitions, but allowed them to sink to the lowest depths of corruption, and into these ghastly and execrable evils which attack not fields and vineyards, house and property, not the body, the soul's servant, but the master of the body, the soul itself. If the divinities ever issued such a prohibition, give me a hint, a proof of it.

Now, let no one come forward triumphantly and boast that an upright and chaste life was inculcated by mysterious doctrines whispered into the ears of a few chosen spirits as a kind of esoteric religion. Let him point out or name any places ever dedicated to assemblies of that sort—not places where scenes were enacted by obscene words and gestures of players, like the Flight of the Kings, celebrated amid a riot of licentiousness and exhibiting, rather, the flight of shame and decency. Let him show places where the people heard what the gods taught about refraining avarice, curbing ambition, controlling lust, where the unfortunate could learn what Persius emphatically urges they should learn, when he says:

> Learn, wretches, and conceive the course of things,
> What man is, and why nature forth him brings:
> His settled bounds, from hence how soon he strays:

What wealth means; that for which the good man prays;
How to use money: how to give to friends,
What we in earth, and God in us intends.'[1]

Let him tell in what places the gods taught these precepts or their worshipers heard them again and again—as I can indicate churches built for this purpose in every part of the world where the Christian religion spread.

Chapter 7

Perhaps they will venture to refer to the schools and discussions of the philosophers. To begin with, these are not products of Rome, but of Greece. If they are to be termed Roman because Greece became a Roman province, then they are not the ordinances of deities, but the creations of human imagination. By the keenness of mind with which they are endowed, these men have striven to fathom the secrets of nature, what is to be aimed at and what avoided in the domain of morals, and in the domain of logic what conclusions are to be drawn with the rigorous sequence demanded by the laws of reasoning, what conclusions do not follow or even contradict their premises.

Some of them, so far as they were guided from on high, made great discoveries; but, as far as they were hindered by human nature, fell into error, especially when Divine Providence justly thwarted their pride in order to show them, even by opposition, that the path of virtue starts from humility and rises to higher things. I shall enquire into and discuss this matter later, the true God and Lord willing. Meanwhile, I may here observe that if the philosophers have discovered

1 *Satires* 3.66-72.

anything that can aid one to lead a good life and attain eternal happiness, how much more fitting would it be to adjudge divine honors to such men!

How much more sensible and proper would it be to have Plato's writings read in a temple dedicated to him than to have the mutilation of the priests of Cybele, the consecration of eunuchs, the slashing of insane men, in the temples of the demons, the perpetration of every cruel and foul, or foully cruel and cruelly foul, abomination that is wont to pass for a religious rite. Far more profitable would it be, for instructing the young in justice, to read the laws of the gods publicly than to give sham praise to the laws and institutions of our ancestors. For, all the worshipers of such gods, when once they are possessed by what Persius calls 'the burning poison of lust,'[1] are more captivated by what Jupiter did than by what Plato taught or Cato censured.

Thus, we read in Terence how a dissolute youth looks upon a wall painting, 'in which the tale was told how Jove sent down a shower of gold into the lap of Danaë.'[2] He appeals to the authority of this weighty example to justify his own lust, with a boast that he did but imitate a god. 'And what god?' he continues. 'Even he that shakes the loftiest temples with thunder. Since he did thus, should a wretch of a man like me not do the same? Why! I did it with all my heart.'[3]

Chapter 8

But, it will be objected, these indecencies are not presented in ceremonial worship, but only in the fables of the poets.

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1 *Ibid.* 3.37,38, *dira libido . . . ferventi tincta veneno.*

2 *Eunuchus* 3.5.36ff.

3 *Ibid.* 42,43.

I do not say that the mysteries are more shameful than the theatricals; but I do affirm, and history will give the lie to those who deny it, that those same plays for which the fancies of the poets supply the dominant elements were not introduced into their worship by the blind devotion of the Romans, but the divinities themselves strictly commanded, and to some extent, constrained their devotees to enact them in all solemnity and dedicate them to their honor. This I alluded to briefly in the first Book. For, it was when a plague was getting the upper hand that the stage plays were first introduced in Rome by the order of the pontifex.

In view of that, who would not deem himself justified in ordinary life in following the kind of conduct vividly exhibited to his eyes in the plays sanctioned by the gods, rather than the laws written down and promulgated by mere human judgment? If the poets misrepresented Jupiter as an adulterer, the chaste gods should have blazed with anger and vengeance that such a scandal was dramatized by men—not because it was being forgotten. These are only the less revolting among the plays, namely, the comedies and the tragedies. These are the dramatizations of poets' fables, amply spotted with indecencies, to be sure, but not composed in the obscene language that befouls many others. Yet, mere boys are compelled by their elders to read and learn these as part of what is called a humane and liberal education.

Chapter 9

What the ancient Romans thought on this subject we are told by Cicero in the books he wrote about the republic, where in one of the discussions Scipio declares: 'The scandal-ridden comedies could never have found favor with the public

unless the standards of the day allowed it.'[1] The Greeks of a former age, perverted though their taste was, were at least consistent in their license. For, even by law, comedy was free to make any allusion to anyone even by name. According to Scipio Africanus[2] in the same work: 'No one was free from attack or even persecution.' No one was spared. Grant that some of the targets of its barbs were dishonorable demagogues and political agitators like Cleon, Cleophon, and Hyperbolus.[3] That is tolerable—although citizens of that type are better black-marked by the censor than by the poet. But, to bespatter with foul verse and drag on the stage such men as Pericles,[4] after he had led his country in war and peace for many years with great distinction, that was no more decent for a poet than if our Plautus or Naevius[5] were to slander Publius and Gnaeus Scipio,[6] or if Caecilius[7] were to revile Marcus Cato.'[8]

A little further on he continues: 'On the contrary, among

1 *De re publica* 4.10.

2 Scipio Africanus Minor (185-129 B.C.), one of the interlocutors in *De re publica.*

3 Cleon (d. 422 B.C.), the type par excellence of the uneducated but eloquent demagogue, is the butt of the satire of Aristophanes in such plays as *The Acharnians* (425 B.C.) and *The Knights* (424 B.C.). Cleophon and Hyperbolus share the attacks.

4 Pericles (495-429 B.C.), the leader of the Athenian democracy at its greatest height in the second half of the fifth century B.C.

5 Titus Maecius Plautus (*c.* 245-184 B.C.), the most popular of the Latin comic dramatists. Maevius was older but less popular, and was finally imprisoned for his attacks on leading citizens of Rome.

6 Publius Cornelius Scipio Africanus Major (*c.* 235-183 B.C.), the conqueror of Hannibal at Zama in 202, was grandfather by adoption of Scipio Africanus Minor and nephew of Gnaeus Cornelius Scipio Calvus, who was consul in 222, and in 211 was killed in battle in Spain.

7 Caecilius Statius (d. 168 B.C.), a comic dramatist in the generation after Plautus. His plays are no longer extant.

8 Marcus Porcius Cato (234-149 B.C.), usually known as Cato the Elder or Cato the Censor, the stern upholder of public morals in Rome.

the very few offenses for which capital punishment was imposed, our Twelve Tables[9] included that of publishing libelous and defamatory verse. That is admirable. For, our lives should not be subject to poets' irresponsible wit, but to the judges of magistrates and to the orderly processes of law; and we should come to hear no accusation except on the condition that the accused is given the opportunity to reply and defend himself in court.'

I have thought fit to cite these passages from the fourth book of Cicero's *De re publica* word for word, except for a few omissions and slight transpositions to make the sense clearer. They are very relevant to the subject which I am trying to make as plain as I can. Cicero's Africanus has other observations to add, and concludes this passage by pointing out that the old Romans viewed with disfavor both the flattering or abusing on the stage of any man still alive. But, as I said, the Greeks, who felt the impropriety of this, nevertheless allowed it for consistency's sake, since they saw that their gods found the scurrilities in the dramatized fables acceptable and pleasing. This was so not only when these were directed against men, but even against the gods themselves, whether the plays were the fictions of poets or true relations of their depravities were enacted in the theatres.

It is a pity that their worshipers regarded them as a subject not merely for laughter, but also for imitation. It was arrogance to spare the reputation of the rulers of the state and of the citizens, when the divinities had so little regard for their own.

9 Early code of Roman law, published in the middle of the fifth century B.C.

Chapter 10

To justify these low comedies, it is alleged that the tales told of the gods are not true, but only fictitious inventions. That itself is even more reprehensible, when you consider the reverence due to religion. If you realize how great is the demons' malice, what more cunning and clever trick to deceive could be imagined? When an insult is flung into the face of a good and capable ruler, is it not all the more unworthy for being far from truth and foreign to his way of life? What penalty, then, is severe enough when such dastardly and monstrous insults are offered to a god?

But, the evil spirits whom the pagans accept as gods are content to have ascribed to themselves even villainies which they have not committed, so long as by encouraging such impostures they can entangle men's minds in a mesh of confusion, and drag them to their destined fate together with themselves. This they do when the depravities have been committed by men whom they rejoice to see taken for gods—for they rejoice over all human errors—and the demons get themselves adored by endless wicked frauds. They work the same deception when men have not really committed the villainies in question. The deceivers are glad to have them imputed to the gods, so that men may find ample and suitable warrant from heaven for perpetrating foul and criminal deeds on earth.

Hence, when the Greeks realized that they had that sort of divinities to serve, they deemed it altogether inadvisable, in view of all the vices which were represented on the stage as exploits of the gods, to protect themselves from the lampoons of the poets. Either they wished to be on a par with gods in this matter, or they feared that by seeking a fairer reputation than the gods enjoyed, and thus giving themselves the advantage, they would provoke the gods to wrath.

Chapter 11

Consistently enough, the Greeks regarded even the actors who presented those fables on the stage as worthy of high public honor. It is related in the *De re publica* that Aeschines,[1] the great Atheian orator, became a statesman after he had played tragedies in his youth, and that another tragic actor, Aristodemus,[2] was sent on frequent embassies to King Philip of Macedon, to negotiate matters of great import for peace and war. In view of the fact that such arts and plays found favor with their gods, it was not thought proper to think of the actors as disreputable persons.

The Greeks conceived the matter perversely enough, but quite in keeping with the character of their gods. They shrank from any measures to protect their people from the barbs of poets and actors, since the divinities themselves were not against being burlesqued by the clowns. Hence, they preferred, not to despise, but rather to respect the actors who mimicked the escapades which their gods found amusing.

By what reasoning could the Greeks honor priests by whose hands sacrifices were offered to the gods, yet hold in low esteem actors by whose pantomiming that pleasure was given which the gods demanded in homage and—as they let it be known—would angrily resent if withheld? For example, Labeo,[3] a reputed expert in matters of this kind, distinguishes good and evil spirits by their respective cults, maintaining that evil gods are appeased by bloody sacrifices and doleful supplications, and good ones by cheerful and pleasant ceremonies, such as plays, banquets, and the so-called 'feasts of the gods.'

With God's help, I may discuss this in more detail later

1 Athenian orator (389-314 B.C) and rival of Demosthenes.
2 Aristodemus was on a commission, along with both Aeschines and Demosthenes, to Philip of Macedon, after the fall of Olynthus in 347 B.C.
3 Author of a work *De diis animalibus.*

on. My only point, for the moment, is whether honor is offered to all the gods indiscriminately as though they were all good (although, in fact, they were all wicked, since they are unclean spirits), or whether, as Labeo thinks, the honors should be distributed with discrimination, some for the good, some for the bad. At all events, the Greeks have done well to honor both the priests, who offer the sacrifices, and the actors who perform the plays. Thus, they do obvious injustice to none of their gods—if the plays please them all. What is less improper, they honor only those they regard as good—if the plays please only them.

Chapter 12

The Romans, on the contrary, as Scipio Africanus rejoiced to recall in that memorable disputation, *De re publica*, refused to have their lives and good name made the target of the poets' gibes, even threatening with capital punishment any one who dared to produce that kind of verse. They did this out of a sense of self-respect, but, surely, with contempt and irreverence for their gods. For, when the Roman people realized that these divinities took the poets' jests and gibes not only with patience, but even with pleasure, they regarded such scurrilities as unworthy of themselves, but not of the gods, and so protected themselves by law, while the gods were left open to attack even in solemn ceremonies.

How, then, Scipio, do you approve when Roman poets are denied freedom to slander a single Roman citizen, while you see that they have spared none of your gods? Does the good repute of your Senate mean more to you than that of the Capitol? Is Rome by itself more to you than the whole of heaven, that poets are forbidden by law to libel your fellow-citizens while, unhindered by any Senator, censor, prince

or pontifex, they spew such foul abuse into the face of your gods? Was it, then, wrong for Plautus or Naevius to slander Publius and Gnaeus Scipio, or for Caecilius to slander M. Cato, and right for Terence to excite the passions of youth by flaunting the misconduct of great and mighty Jove?

Chapter 13

If Scipio were still alive, he might possibly reply: 'Who were we to put a penalty on observance which the divinities themselves invested with religious character? It was they who introduced the Roman custom of having dedicated and performed in their honor theatrical exhibitions which glorify improprieties in word and deed.' Surely, it was more logical to realize that those gods could not be true gods, worthy of divine honors given by the State. Surely, decency and propriety absolutely forbade that honor be rendered to gods who demanded stage exhibits that are insulting to Romans. How, then, I ask, did anyone come to think of worshiping, instead of abominating, those evil spirits of deceit who demanded that their depravities be exhibited in public worship?

Moreover, though the Roman people were so sunk in superstition as to honor divinities whom they saw craving to have their lewdness paraded in religious pageantry, they still had enough regard for dignity and decency not to exalt, like the Greeks, the actors of such farces. On the contrary, as Scipio tells us in Cicero's *De re publica,* 'As long as the Romans despised dramatic art and everything connected with the stage, that type of men forfeited the respect of other citizens and had their names struck off the roll of their tribe with the brand of infamy.'

That is admirable good sense, for which the Roman people must be given credit, but I could wish that it were consistent

with itself, and carried into action. For, it was right for any Roman citizen who chose the theatrical profession not only to be kept out of posts of honor, but also to be excluded from his own tribe by the censor's stigma. That was a spirit jealous of the country's good name and genuinely Roman! But, in the name of consistency, let someone explain to me why actors are debarred from all public dignities, while the plays they perform on the stage are made part of divine worship! For a long time, in their more virtuous days, the Romans knew nothing of stage masquers. If these had been sought to satisfy men's lust, they would have crept in as the result of corruption of men's morals. But, it was the gods who demanded the mummeries. How, then, can one cast out the mummer through whom the deity is worshiped? How can the performer of that theatrical indecency be stigmatized if the god who demands it is adored?[1]

In this controversy, let the Greeks and the Romans fight out the issue. On the one side, the Greeks think they are right in showing regard for actors because they worship the gods who demand stage plays. On the other, the Romans will not suffer actors to be a blot even on their low-born tribe, and much less on the senatorial order. In this debate, the whole question is brought to the point by the following argument. The Greeks submit as a major premise: 'If gods of that sort are to be worshiped, then, surely, men of that sort are to be honored.' The Romans add the minor: 'But men of that sort are in no way to be honored.' The Christian draws the conclusion: 'Therefore, such gods are in no way to be worshiped.'

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1 . . . *qua fronte notatur actor, si adoratur exactor?*

Chapter 14

The next question we may ask is: Why are not the poets who fabricate such fables and who by the Law of the Twelve Tables were forbidden to blacken any citizen's good name—why are they not put in the same disreputable class as the actors, since they, too, bespatter the gods with infamous jibes? How is a man justified who denounces the impersonators of the god-defaming caricature of the poets, and yet who commends their authors? Perhaps the palm should be given to the Greek Plato. In conceiving the constitution of the ideal State, he thought it proper to exclude from the city the poets, as enemies of the truth.[1] He would tolerate no insults to the gods, nor permit the minds of the people to be mislead and perverted by fictions.

Now, compare Plato, a mere man, permitting no poets in the city to impose upon the people, with the gods, who are divine, itching to be honored with pantomimes. Even though he could not convince them in argument, Plato urged the frivolous and dissolute Greeks to abstain even from writing such indecencies. The gods, on the other hand, compelled even grave and respectable Romans to perform them. Nor were they content merely with their being staged; they had them dedicated and consecrated to themselves and solemnly celebrated. To whom, then, should the city award divine honors with greater propriety? To Plato, who strove to debar those unspeakable obscenities, or to the demons who gloated in deluding the men whom Plato failed to convince of the truth?

Labeo was of the opinion that Plato should have been numbered among the demi-gods, as were Hercules and Romu-

1 *Republic,* Book III.

lus. He ranked the demigods above the heroes, counting both as divinities. But, I do not hesitate to place the man he calls a demigod not only above the heroes, but above the gods themselves. For, there is a certain kinship between the laws of the Romans and the dialogues of Plato, in so far as he reprobates all the fabrications of poets, while the Romans deny to poets at least the right to calumniate people. Plato forbids poets to live within the precincts of a city; the Romans exclude at least the impersonators of poetical fictions from the citzen community, and would, no doubt, drive them out altogether did they dare oppose the gods, who are responsible for the plays.

In view of all this, how was it possible for the Roman people to hope to receive from the gods any laws calculated to produce good morals or reform evil ones? The gods are beaten and put to shame by the laws of Rome. The gods demand plays in their honor; the Romans exclude the players from all public honors. The gods order slanders on gods to be paraded in poetical farces; the Romans punish the impudent poets if they slander men. Meanwhile, that demigod Plato not only rebuked the shamelessness of the gods, but also pointed out what the Romans should do if they would be true to their character. This he did when he permitted no poets within a well-ordered state, on the ground that they were willful liars or too inclined to set before poor mortals the shabby doings of the deities as models to imitate.

On our part, we Christians regard Plato neither as a god nor a demigod, nor do we place him on a level with any of God's holy angels, or with a prophet of truth or apostle, or with any martyr of Christ or simple Christian. The reason for this statement will, God willing, be given in due course. But, as long as you yourselves will have him as demigod, our

opinion is that he should be set above Romulus or Hercules, for no historian or poet ever affirmed or imagined that Plato slew his brother or committed a grievous crime; assuredly, above Priapus or the dog-headed Anubis or the goddess Fever, divinities whom the Romans partly adopted from foreign cults and partly made their own.

How, then, could such divinities enact good laws and ordinances either to ward off such widespread mental and moral corruption or to eradicate it once it had taken root? This the more so, since they did their utmost to sow the seeds and nurture vice by their desire to have those depravities presented to the people on the public stage as the real or supposed exploits of the gods, thus kindling, thus giving, as it were, divine warrant to the rebellion of the basest human impulses. Cicero was a voice crying in the desert when he exclaimed, thinking of the poets: 'When they have won the plaudits and approbation of the people as if it were the verdict of an eminent judge, what darkness invades their mind, what fears beset it, what passions inflame it?'[2]

Chapter 15

What determined the choice of these false gods was not so much reason as adulation. They did not think their demigod Plato worthy of a shrine, for all his efforts to check by argument those spiritual passions which corrupt men's morals unless they are carefully controlled. Yet, they set their Romulus above many of their gods, though in the light of their own esoteric doctrine he should be regarded only as an inferior divinity.

They even assigned to him a flamen of a priestly class,

2 *De re publica* 4.9.

ranking, as the tassle on their caps revealed, so high in Roman worship that only three gods were so honored: Jupiter, with the Dial flamen; Mars, with the Martial; and Romulus, with the Quirinal. His fellow citizens called him Quirinus after their indulgent hearts had given him a place in heaven. Thereby, Romulus stood higher in their esteem than Neptune and Pluto, Jupiter's brothers; higher than Saturn himself, their sire. Accordingly, they alloted to his service the same high priesthood they had allotted to Jupiter, as well as to Mars, his reputed father, presumably for his sake.

Chapter 16

If the Romans had received a rule of life from their gods, they would not have been obliged to borrow the laws of Solon from the Athenians, as they did some [three hundred] years[1] after Rome was founded. However, they did not retain these laws in the form they received them, but sought to improve them by appropriate changes. Though Lycurgus[2] imagined that he had framed a constitution for the Spartans by Apollo's bidding, the Romans very wisely rejected the tale and refused to accept their laws from that source.

Numa Pompilius, who reigned next after Romulus,[3] is reported to have framed a body of rules, however inadequate, for the government of the State, and to these he added many regulations concerning religious worship. Yet, no one ever said that he received those laws from divine hands.[4] From

1 St. Augustine says *aliquot annos,* but Livy (3 31-34) tells the story of three Roman ambassadors going to copy the laws of Solon as happening 299 years after the founding of Rome. The code which resulted became known as the Twelve Tables.

2 During the seventh century B.C.

3 Romulus (753-715 B C); *Numa Pompilius* (715-673).

4 Cf., however, Book VII, Chapters 34, 35, for the story of Numa's hydromancy.

all this, it appears that the gods had no concern for the many vices in thought, life, and conduct into which their worshipers might fall, and which, as their own sages assure us, may cause great states to fall even though the cities survive intact. In fact, the gods, as pointed out above, contributed by every means to swell the flood of vice.

Chapter 17

It may be argued that the reason why the gods did not legislate for the Roman people was that, as Sallust says: 'By nature more than by laws, justice and morality flourish among the Romans.'[1] I presume, then, that it was this natural justice and morality that explains the rape of the Sabine women! What could be more just and moral than that other people's daughters should be decoyed under pretense of a circus and then, not by parental consent, but by violence, be snatched away by anyone who could! If the Sabines did wrong in refusing to surrender their daughters upon demand how much greater was the wrong in seizing them when not surrendered?

It was more just, one must suppose, to go to war with a people for refusing to give their daughters in marriage to their countrymen and neighbors who had requested them, than with a people who demanded that their stolen daughters be restored! So, the first kind of war would be declared; and Mars would come to the aid of his son, battling to avenge with arms the affront of the wives denied. By that strategy he would win the women he desired. I suppose, by some imaginary right of war, a victor might justly carry away wives unjustly denied. Certainly, by no known right of peace could Romulus seize women who were refused, and wage an iniquitous war against their justly indignant parents.

1 *Catilina* 9.

However, one rather fortunate circumstance redeems that notorious rape. The games of the circus remained as an institution to commemorate the infamous fraud, but the precedent set by that crime met with no applause in the city and land of the Romans. The Romans made a greater mistake by making Romulus a god for themselves after his part in that shameful event than by allowing his rape of women to receive approval in any law or custom.

I presume that the same sense of 'justice and morality' explains another fact. After the expulsion of King Tarquin and his sons,[2] one of whom raped Lucretia by violence, the consul Junius Brutus compelled L. Tarquinius Collatinus, Lucretia's husband, his colleague and a man above reproach, to resign his office and remove himself from the city. Because of his name and kinship with the Tarquins, he was allowed to reside there no longer. This crime he perpetrated with the connivance, or at least sufferance, of the very people who had conferred the consulship both on Collatinus and on Brutus himself.

Once more I take it that it was that same inborn disposition to 'justice and morality' that sealed the fate of Camillus. In the course of a ten-year struggle with Veii, the Roman people's bitterest foe, the Roman army fought badly and was repeatedly shattered. Rome itself was on the point of panic, fearing for its safety. Then M. Camillus,[3] one of the most remarkable men of his time came forward, and conquered and captured their flourishing city with remarkable ease. But, his bravery aroused the envy of detractors and stung

2 The traditional date is 510 B.C.

3 The tradition of Marcus Furius Camillus is that he was made dictator in five different critical years: 396, 390, 386, 368, and 367 B.C. In 396 he destroyed Veii; in 390 he delivered Rome from the Gauls.

the pride of the tribunes of the people, who declared him guilty of misconduct. The incredible ingratitude of the city he had saved chilled him to the marrow, and, feeling certain of condemnation, he betook himself into voluntary exile. In his absence he was even fined ten thousand copper asses. Not long after this, he once more saved his ungrateful country, this time from the Gauls.

It would be wearisome to rehearse all the immorality and injustice that kept that Roman state in turmoil, while the aristocracy did their utmost to keep the people under, and the people struggled against subjection, with the leaders of both sides swayed more by a desire to gain party advantage than by any thought of what was right and good.

Chapter 18

I shall now desist and let Sallust testify. He was speaking in praise of the Romans when he uttered those words which prompted the present discussion: 'By nature more than by laws, justice and morality flourished among the Romans.'[1] He had in mind the time following the expulsion of the kings, when the state saw a brief interval of extraordinary prosperity. Yet, the same writer, in the very first words of the first book of his *History*, avows that, even when the government of the country passed from the hands of the kings to those of the consuls, it was not long before the unjust dealings of those in power caused the plebeians to break with the patricians. The city was divided by other factions, too.

He recalled that between the second and the last Carthaginian wars the Roman people lived in the best moral conditions and the greatest harmony. But, he also added that that

1 *Catilina* 9.

happy state was not due to a love of justice but to the fear of a precarius peace as long as Carthage stood. It was to hold corruption in check and to preserve good morals that the famous Nasica opposed the destruction of Carthage. He wanted vice restrained by fear.

The same Sallust immediately adds: 'But dissension, avarice, and ambition, and all the rest of the vices that prosperity commonly engenders, multiplied beyond bounds once Carthage fell.'[2] He wanted us to understand that even before that event vices sprang up and spread. Then, he adds the reasons for his statement: 'The wrongs done by the powerful, the consequent break of the people with the aristocrats, and the other domestic dissensions had happened from the beginning. It was only after the expulsion of the kings, while fear of Tarquin prevailed, and the war with the Etruscans continued, that justice and reasonableness reigned.' You can see that the measure of equity and good order which marked even the brief space after the banning and expulsion of the kings must be ascribed to fear, as Sallust said—fear of the war which King Tarquin, after he was dragged from the throne and driven out of the city, waged against the Romans, with the help of the Etruscans.

Note well the statement he adds: 'Then the patricians began to treat the people like slaves, to dispose of life and limb as arrogantly as the kings had done, to drive them from their fields and, by excluding all others from participation, to monopolize the government. But, oppressed by these outrages, and especially by usury, while they had at the same time to bear the burden of taxes for incessant wars and of military service as well, the people rose up in arms, and entrenched themselves

2 *Historiae* 1.9.

on the Sacred Mount and the Aventine. Thus, they then secured for themselves tribunes and other rights. It was only the Second Punic War that put an end to the dissensions and struggles between the two classes.'

You see, then, what kind of people the Romans were, even during the short space of time following the banishment of the kings, the people of whom it was said that 'by nature more than by laws, justice and morality flourished among them.'

Moreover, if such were the times when the Roman state was supposed to be at its fairest and best, what is one to think and say of the subsequent period, after the destruction of Carthage? Then, to use the words of the same historian, 'transformed little by little from the fairest and best, it became the worst and the most immoral.'[3] In his *History* you may read how succinctly Sallust recalls and describes these times, and also gives the proof of the horrible degeneracy of morals which prosperous times engendered, and which eventually produced a brood of civil wars. 'From that time on,' he says, 'the morals of our forebears declined, not little by little as before, but rushing headlong like a torrent. The younger generation sank so deep into immorality and avarice that it can justly be said that they were born neither to possess property nor to leave in peace those who did.'[4] Sallust had much more to say about the vices of Sulla and of the foul state of the republic in other respects. Other writers say the same, though not with the same mastery of description. I am sure you can see, as anyone with eyes open must, into what morass of immorality the republic was sunk before the coming of our Heavenly King.

3 *Catilina* 5.
4 *Historiae* 1.12.

All these deplorable things were done, not only before Christ in the flesh began to teach, but even before He was born of the Virgin. This mass of depravity belongs to pagan times. The evils, somewhat mitigated before the fall of Carthage, reached the depths of abomination after that event. It was the pagan gods whose sinister cunning planted in men's minds the seeds which produced so evil a harvest. Yet, our critics dare not impute this to their gods. By what strange logic, then, do the pagans charge the present troubles to Christ, whose life-giving doctrine forbids the worship of false and deceiving gods and whose divine will abominates and condemns the vicious and criminal actions of men? He weans His children away from all this wickedness in a rotting and tottering world, in order to establish an eternal City that will be really glorious—not by vain praise, but in very truth.

Chapter 19

Take a look at your Roman republic. I am not the first to paint this picture. The writers, whose works we studied in school for a fee, told the tale before Christ's coming. Remember? 'From a state of virtuous splendor it sank by gradual change to one of shameful corruption.' It was before Christ's coming, and after the destruction of Carthage, that 'the morals of our forefathers declined, not little by little as before, but rushing headlong like a torrent. So deep into immorality and avarice did the younger generation sink.'

Let our critics read to us any commandments which the gods ever gave to their Roman people, setting bounds to debauchery and greed. It is not merely that they had abstained from any mention of chastity and modesty to the people. They went so far as actually to demand lewdness and

indecency. They gave those things the sanction of divine approval.

As against all this, let them turn to our moral teachings. The Prophets, the Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, and the Epistles have thundered their condemnation of greed and lust into the ears of the throngs assembled in every part of the empire for the very purpose of hearing them. Sublime and divinely inspired utterances, they are not like the cackle of contentious philosophers, but like oracles from God's heaven. But, strangely enough, while our pagan foes are slow to impute to their gods the fact that immodesty, avarice, brutal and shameful living turned the Roman commonwealth into a 'sink of corruption' before the advent of Christ, they loudly reproach the Christian religion for whatever bitter pill their arrogance and their love of pleasure have to swallow at the present time.

Yet, if all would but hear and practice what that religion has to teach about the just and virtuous way to live—'kings of the earth and all people: princes and all judges of the earth, young men and maidens . . . the young with the older,'[1] every age and sex, and even those to whom John the Baptist addressed himself, the publicans and soldiers—then, the Roman Empire would by its happy state transform the countries of the world into so many lands flowing with milk and honey and would rise to eternal life and reign in unending bliss.

But, while one of you listens, another scoffs, and most of you are drawn more by the flattery of vice than by the salutary austerity of virtue. Thus, the servants of Christ, whether kings, princes, or judges, simple soldiers or commanders, rich or

1 Ps. 148.11,12.

poor, freemen or slaves, men or women, are bidden, if they must, to put up with even an utterly vicious and degraded commonwealth—for, by such sufferance, they will win a place in that supremely holy and exalted angelic assemblange and heavenly country where God's will is law.

Chapter 20

The worshipers and devotees of those gods of yours, the men who gaily ape their vices and depravities, are not in the least disturbed to see their country wallow in a dismal swamp of immorality. 'As long as it endures,' they say, 'as long as it prospers amid plenty and can boast of victories and enjoy the security of peace, what do morals matter to us? What concerns us more is that everyone should become richer and richer, so as to be able to bear the costs of his daily excesses, and to lord it over his economically weaker fellows. Let the poor toady to the rich in order to fill their stomachs and enjoy indolent ease under their patronage. Let the rich use the poor to surround themselves with a crowd of satellites and to enhance their prestige. Let the mob applaud, not those who think of what is good for them, but those who minister to their pleasures. Let no one impose toil and trouble, or prohibit impure pleasures. Rulers must not bother whether their people are virtuous, if only they can keep them subject. The people of the provinces must not obey the governors as guardians of their morals, but as managers of their affairs and purveyors of their pleasures. They are not to show them sincere respect, but cower before them in base servility. As for the laws, let them look to wrongs against property without bothering about moral propriety.

No one should be brought to court, except one who has

done harm or nuisance to another's property, home, or limb, or to an unwilling party. As for the rest, each man can do his own sweet will with his goods, with his subjects, or with the goods or subjects of any others who consent. Let there be public harlots in abundance for all who would indulge their lust, and, above all, for those who have no mistresses of their own.

Let houses be built, spacious and exquisitely furnished, and let people come to sumptuous banquets where each one can gamble and drink and vomit and carouse day or night, as much as he pleases or is able. Let the noise of dancing be everywhere. Let the theatres resound with lewd merriment and with every kind of cruel and vicious pleasure. Let the man who dislikes these pleasures be branded as a public enemy, and, should he attempt to interfere with them, let the mob be free to hound him to death. Let those rulers be regarded as true gods who devote themselves to giving the people a good time, and guarantee them its continuance. Let them be worshiped in the manner they desire, and demand the plays they please, in the company, or at the expense, of their devotees. Only let them take care that no foe, no plague, no calamity interfere with this reign of prosperity.

What man in his right senses would place this kind of commonwealth on the same level with, I do not say the Roman Empire, but with the house of Sardanapalus.[1] This king abandoned himself so completely to dissipation that on his tomb he had inscribed that in death he possessed only what in life his lust had enjoyed. If those pleasure-seekers had a king of that sort, who indulged them in such

1 The luxurious king of Assyria, usually identified with Ashurbanipal (669-625 B.C.). Cicero, in the *Tusculan Disputations* (5.35) cites a Latin metrical version of the supposed epitaph.

things and placed not the slightest restraint on anyone's whim, they would dedicate to him a temple and a high-priest more readily than did the ancient Romans to Romulus.

Chapter 21

If no heed be paid to the one who declared the Roman state a 'sink of iniquity,' and if my opponents, content if it can but endure, are not moved by the shame and ignominy of utter degeneration that floods it, let them note that it has not merely become the 'sink of iniquity' described by Sallust, but that, as Cicero maintains, it had long since perished, and no longer endured as a state. Cicero lets that same Scipio who had destroyed Carthage voice his opinion of the state at a time when men felt a presentiment that it would soon be brought low by the rottenness which Sallust describes. Cicero's comments belong to that dramatic time of the murder of Tiberias Gracchus,[1] who, as Sallust writes, stirred up dangerous revolts. His death is mentioned in the same work of Cicero.

Scipio, then, had said: 'In playing the lute, or the flute, or even in vocal music, the different notes should be kept in harmony. If they are changed into discord, the trained ear cannot endure it. That agreeable harmony, however, is produced by the modulation of tones that are very dissimilar. In like manner, as in music, out of the highest and the lowest classes,

1 Tiberius Sempronius Gracchus, as tribune of the people in 133 B.C., proposed a land-distribution law and produced the crisis which led to his murder by the conservatives led by P. Cornelius Scipio Nasica, who had married Sempronia, the sister of the Gracchi. Scipio was found dead in his bed in 129; and it is in this year that the dialogue of *De re publica* is placed.

and of those that lie between, by a reasonable control, the State is fashioned into a concordant whole by the consent of very diverse elements. What musicians call harmony in music, in the State is known as concord, the closest and strongest bond of security in any commonwealth, and which can in no way exist without justice.'[2] Then, further on, after he had discussed more fully how much the State has to gain from justice and how much to lose from the lack of it, Philus,[3] one of the participants in the discussion, took up the discourse and earnestly begged that the question be treated more thoroughly, and that more be said about justice, especially as the common opinion was that the State could not be governed without justice. Scipio also agreed that the question must be thrashed out and elucidated. His answer was that nothing had as yet been said about the State that could serve as a basis for further discussion until two facts were established: first of all, the falsity of the view that the State can not be governed without injustice, and, secondly, the solidity of the truth that it can not be governed without absolute justice.

The consideration of that question was put off to the following day, and in the third Book the matter is introduced amid a clash of opinions. Philus himself championed the stand of those who held that the State could not be governed without injustice being done, after he had solemnly disclaimed any share in such opinion. With earnestness, he advocated the case of injustice against justice, and by specious arguments and illustrations he strove to prove that injustice was an advantage to the State, while justice served no useful purpose. Then Laelius, in his turn, and at the instance of the whole

2 *De re publica* 2.42.

3 L. Fabius Philus belonged to the literary circle of Scipio and his friend Laelius.

company, undertook to vindicate the claims of justice. With all the emphasis he could command, he declared that the State could have no greater enemy than injustice, and that no commonwealth could either be governed or endure if justice did not dominate.

After the pros and cons of this question had been examined, Scipio again took up the broken threads of the discussion, and, going back to his definition of the republic, he endorsed in a few words the stand that 'the commonwealth is the weal of the people.' He defines the people as 'not any mass gathering, but a multitude bound together by a mutual recognition of rights and a mutual cooperation for the common good.'[4] He then proceeds to point out the advantage of defining terms when engaged in a discussion, and from principles accurately stated he concludes that you have a true commonwealth, that is, the weal of the people, when it is rightly and justly administered either by one monarch, or by a few men of rank, or by all the people.

But, if the prince is unjust, or a tyrant (to use the Greek word), or if the aristocrats are unjust (in which case their group is merely a faction), or if the people themselves are unjust (and must be called, for lack of a better word, a tyrant also), then the commonwealth is not merely bad, as it was described in the discussion of the previous day, but is no commonwealth at all. The reason for that is that there is no longer the welfare of the people, once a tyrant or a faction seizes it; nor would the people, if unjust, be any longer a people, because they would not then be regarded as a multitude bound together by a common recognition of rights, and a mutual

4 *Populum autem non omnem coetum multitudinis, sed coetum iuris consensu et utilitatis communione sociatum esse determinat* (*De re publica* 1.25).

cooperation for the common good, as the standard definition of a people demands.

When, therefore, the Roman republic was such as Sallust describes it, it was not only 'very wicked and corrupt'—'a sink of iniquity,' as he puts it—it was no republic at all, if measured by the criterion established by its ablest representatives when they met to debate the nature of a republic.

Tullius himself, at the beginning of his fifth book, quotes the verse of the poet Ennius declaring: 'The Roman state rests on the men and the morals of old,' and in his own words, not those of Scipio or any other, remarks: 'That line for its conciseness and truth sounds to me like the utterance of an oracle. For, had not the state been blessed with a wholesome body of citizens, and had not those men stood at the head, neither men nor morals could have availed to found or so long maintain a republic of such might to rule so far and wide and so justly. Indeed, long before our time, it was the custom of the land to appoint distinguished men who held fast to the ancient traditions and the institutions of our forefathers. Our own generation inherited the republic, an exquisite masterpiece, indeed, though faded with age; but it failed to restore its original colors. Worse, alas; it did not even move a finger to preserve as much as its form, or its barest outlines.

What is there left of the ancient virtue which the illustrious poet Ennius declared was the mainstay of the Roman state? We are aware only that it has been so utterly cast to the winds that morals are not merely unobserved, but are positively ignored. What can we say of the men? Precisely for want of men the good old customs have been lost, and for so great an evil not only are we responsible but we should face judgment, like culprits fearing the penalty of death. By our own vices,

not by chance, we have lost the republic, though we retain the name.'

All this, Cicero avowed many years after the death of Africanus, one of the disputants in the *Republic,* and before the coming of Christ.[5] If such reproaches were expressed or entertained after the triumphant advance of the Christian religion, there is not a pagan who would not think of charging them to the Christians. Why, then, did their gods not save from disaster that republic which, long before Christ appeared in the flesh, Cicero mournfully deplores as lost?

Let its panegyrists really take a look at the republic in the day of those ancient men and customs. Let them ask whether true justice flourished and inspired morality or was merely a colored painting of justice, as Cicero himself unwittingly suggests, while meaning to praise it.

We shall consider this later,[6] God willing. In its proper place I shall endeavor to show that that ancient creation was never a true republic, because in it true justice was never practiced. I shall base my position on Cicero's own definitions, in the light of which he briefly determined, through the mouth of Scipio, what was a republic and what was a people. There are many confirmatory opinions expressed in that discussion both by himself and by the interlocutors he introduced.

However, according to some definitions that are nearer the truth, it was a commonwealth of a sort, and it was better governed by the earlier Romans than by those who came later. But, true justice is not to be found save in that commonwealth, if we may so call it, whose Founder and Ruler is Jesus Christ—for, no one can deny that this is the weal of the people. This name, with its varied meanings, is perhaps

5 The publication of *De re publica* is usually dated 54 B.C.
6 The promise is fulfilled in Book 19, Chapter 21.

not quite in tune with our language, but this at least is certain: True justice reigns in that state of which Holy Scripture says: 'Glorious things are said of thee, O City of God.'[7]

Chapter 22

But, concerning the subject under discussion, however deserving of praise they say the republic once was or still is, the fact remains that by the testimony of their most well-informed writers it had, long before Christ's coming, become a sink of iniquity. Never a true republic, it had fallen through the foulness of its morals. Surely, to prevent this fall, it was a duty of its divine guardians to prescribe for their worshipers a way of life and a code of morals. This people honored them with temples, priests, and sacrifices of every sort, with count- of grandiose festival plays. In all this, the devils looked only less rites and solemn celebrations, and with an endless round after their own interest. They cared nothing for the kind of life the people led. In fact, they actively abetted evil living so long as the people, in slavish fear, performed all those rites in their honor.

If the gods did prescribe such a moral code, bring it out; produce it; let us know what laws divinely given to the Roman citizens were violated by the Gracchi when a whirlwind of disorder followed their revolts. What laws did Marius and his lieutenants Cinna and Carbo disregard when they plunged into a civil war,[1] begun with wicked intention, carried on with barbarity, and ended with savagery? What laws did Sulla flout? He was a man whose whole life, morals, and

7 Ps. 86.3.

1 88-82 B.C.

actions as described by Sallust and other historians make one shudder. Was not, in fact, the republic of old already fallen?

In view of such public morals, who will dare to adduce, in defence of the gods, the familiar phrase of Virgil: 'The gods, by whom this empire stood, left all the temples and the altars bare.'[2] If that be so, they have no reason to blame the Christian religion, as though their injured gods, on that account, foresook them. As a matter of fact, their forebears, in their rough way, drove from the altars of the city a whole mob of lesser gods, like so many flies. Yet, where was this mob of divinities at the crisis when, long before the old morals were corrupted, Rome was captured and set in flames by the Gauls? Were they, perhaps, on the scene, but asleep? For, on that occasion almost the entire city fell into the power of the enemy. The Capitoline Hill alone escaped, and it too, would have been seized had not the geese, at least, kept watch while the gods slumbered.[3]

It was because of this that Rome, stooping to the superstition of the Egyptians and their adoration of beasts and birds, adopted the custom of solemnizing the feast of the goose. But, this is only in passing. I do not as yet intend to discuss these accidental evils which came in the wake of hostile invasion or of other misfortunes, and afflict the body rather than the soul. At the moment, I am concerned with the immorality, as first seeping in little by little, then like a torrent making a ruin of the republic—though its roofs and walls stood intact. This was so complete that great writers did not hesitate to declare that the state had perished. The gods might have departed with some right and 'left the temples and

2 *Aeneid* 2.351,352.

3 The Gauls entered Rome in 390 B C. The story of the geese is told by Livy (5.47).

altars bare' in order to ruin the state, if the citizens had made sport of any code of morality and justice which the gods had given them. But, tell me, what sort of gods are those who refused to live with a people that worshiped them, after they had failed to teach their worshipers to give up a life of scandal for one of decency?

Chapter 23

The gods seem even to have lent their aid in satisfying the peoples' base desires. At all events, it can be shown that they gave no aid in holding them in check. Did they not assist Marius, a political upstart of low birth and a bloodthirsty inciter and leader of civil war? He secured the consulship for seven terms and died in the fullness of life during his seventh consulship, before he could fall into the hands of Sulla, who was about to emerge as victor. If the gods gave no help to Marius, that is significant. It points to the fact that a man, even without the favor of the gods, can achieve that large measure of earthly prosperity which men have so much at heart, and can be as powerful and happy as Marius was and enjoy health, strength, riches, honors, respect and long life, even though the gods are against him. On the other hand, it can happen that men like the noble Regulus suffer and die in captivity, slavery, destitution, sleeplessness, and pain, though the gods smile on him with favor.

If they grant this, then they flatly confess that the gods do them no good, and that to worship them is time lost. For, if those gods arranged things so that the people were taught principles directly opposed to the virtues of the soul and decency of life, for which men expect a reward after death, and if even as regards transitory and temporal blessings the gods have no power to hurt those they hate or benefit those

they love, what is the sense of making such ado about their worship? Why should men utter any complaint in times of depression and gloom, as though the gods had withdrawn themselves under insult, and why, on their account, should anyone bespatter Christ's religion with vile abuse?

If they have any power to do good or evil in these matters, why did they lend their aid to the scoundrel Marius and deny it to the noble Regulus? Is not this proof to anyone that they are the most unjust and wicked of beings? If any imagine that that is the more reason why they should be feared and worshiped, even there they are mistaken, for it is known that the noble Regulus honored them no less than Marius. It is also an error to fancy that, because the gods smiled on Marius more than they did on Regulus, a wicked life is therefore the best choice. For, there was Metellus,[1] a man highly esteemed among the Romans. He had five sons who filled consular office, and, beyond that, he was blessed in temporal goods. In contrast, there was Catiline, an unspeakably wicked man, who lived in crushing poverty and who fell miserably in the civil war he had criminally let loose. And there is the truest and securest kind of happiness which is the lot only of the good who worship the true God, who alone has the power to bestow it.

Thus, when the old republic was dying from the corrosion of low morals, the gods did not move a finger to guide or correct those morals and thus save it from death. On the contrary, they contributed to the depravity and corruption, that it might more surely die. It is of no use for them to pose as virtuous and to pretend that they departed because they were

1 Quintus Caecilius Metellus Macedonius, a commander in Macedonia in 146 B.C., and consul in 143, died in 115, just before his fourth son became consul.

repelled by the depravity of the citizens. They were on the spot; they are discovered and convicted. They could neither help by their counsels nor hide by their silence.

I need not recall how the sympathetic people of Minturnae implored their goddess Marica in her grove that Marius might succeed in everything; then, how he was rescued from a desperate situation and returned safe, and ferocious—at the head of a ferocious army and against Rome. How murderous, barbarous, and more savage than an enemy's was his victory there may be read in the histories.

But, as I said, I need not recall this. In any case, I do not attribute the bloodstained success of Marius to some Marica or other, but to God's secret providence. Providence uses such means to silence our enemies and save those unbelievers from their errors who are without prejudice and are wise enough to learn. For, though the demons have some power in these matters, they have only as much as the hidden will of Almighty God allows them. This is in order that we may not, in view of such deceptions, overestimate earthly success, which, as in the case of Marius, is as a rule bestowed also upon the wicked; again, that we may in other respects regard it as an evil thing, seeing that, despite the demons, many good and religious souls, devoted to the true God, have enjoyed it in large measure. Neither should we consider that the same unclean spirits should be appeased or feared, if only on account of these earthly goods or evils. For, neither wicked men on earth, nor the demons, can do all they desire, save in so far as is allowed by God's ordinance, whose judgments no man can fully comprehend, or justly reprehend.

Chapter 24

As for Sulla[1] himself, who brought his times so low that the preceding period, of which he posed as the champion or reformer, was by comparison more desirable, Titus Livy tells the following incident. It took place at the moment when Sulla first moved his army to march to Rome against Marius. At the sacrifice to the gods, the animal's entrails showed such favorable omens that the augur Postumius offered to deliver himself to custody and lose his head if, with the help of the gods, Sulla failed to carry to a successful conclusion the plans he had in mind. Note that the gods had not yet 'departed and left the temples and the altars bare' when they were predicting the outcome of Sulla's war, without giving a thought to the reform of the man himself. In prophecy, they promised him huge success, but there was not one word of warning to curb his insatiable greed.

Again, while he was waging war against Mithridates in Asia, Jupiter sent him, through Lucius Titus, the assurance that he would vanquish Mithridates, and so it happened. Later, while Sulla was planning to return to Rome—to avenge his own and his friends' wrongs in a bloody civil war—Jupiter reminded him by a soldier of the sixth legion that he had prophesied his victory over Mithridates, and now promised him power to recover the republic from its enemies, even at the cost of blood. Sulla asked the soldier to describe the shape of the vision he had seen. When the soldier did so, Sulla remembered that it was the same as the one previously described by that Titus who brought the prediction that he would crush Mithridates.

Now, what answer can they give to this pertinent question:

1 Lucius Cornelius Sulla Felix (138-78 B.C.) became dictator in Rome in 82 and abdicated in 79. He died after a year of excessive indulgence.

Why were the gods so solicitous to announce those successes as happy events, while not one of them bothered about warning Sulla to amend his ways? They knew that he was on the point of unloosing such a criminal civil war as would not merely drag the republic in the mud, but would reduce it to ruins. It is one more indication of what the demons are. As I have so often suggested, and as we know from Sacred Scripture, and as the facts themselves reveal, their business is to see that they are taken for gods and worshiped accordingly, that such honors be bestowed upon them as will make their worshipers accomplices in an evil cause, most damnable in God's judgment.

On a later occasion, when Sulla reached Tarentum and there offered sacrifice, he beheld in the upper part of a calf's liver the likeness of a golden crown. This the augur Postumius interpreted as presaging a brilliant victory, and bade him eat that part of the entrails all alone. A few minutes later, the slave of a certain Lucius Pontius prophesied in a loud voice: 'Sulla, I bring you a message from Bellona: Victory is yours!' Adding that the capitol would be burned down, he rushed out of the camp. The next day he was back, very excited, to announce that the capitol was already in ashes. And in ashes it was. It was an easy matter for an evil spirit both to foresee the event and to announce it so quickly.

But, mark well, for this is much to our purpose, what sort of gods those men choose for masters who blaspheme the Savior because He delivers the hearts of the faithful from the Devil's domination. The man who played the prophet shouted: 'Sulla, victory is yours!' And, to make it credible that he spoke by divine inspiration, he announced a proximate event that soon occurred in a place far distant from the man through whom the spirit spoke. But, note, he did not

cry: 'Sulla, keep away from criminal acts'—of which as victor he perpetrated the most horrible. In the golden crown in the calf's liver Sulla had seen the signal token of his victory. But, if gods who give such signs were good gods and not wicked demons, surely in those entrails they would have rather pointed out how abominable in themselves and how disastrous to Sulla himself were the evils that lay ahead.

That victory which enhanced his dignity brought disaster to his cupidity; for, casting moderation aside, he brought more ruin upon his moral character than upon the bodies of his enemies. This truly sad and lamentable outcome was not foretold to him by those gods, either by entrails or auguries, or by any dream or divination. They feared his reform more than they did his defeat. Their aim was to make the conqueror of the Roman people a slave to shameful vices, and thus to chain him more securely to the demons themselves.

Chapter 25

Only a man who prefers to imitate that sort of god rather than, with God's grace, to reject their company will fail to see, from facts like these, how those sinister spirits try to cast a kind of glamor of divine authority on wicked acts. They were actually seen, on a plain in Campania, fighting a pitched battle among themselves, shortly before the citizen armies were locked in a bloody encounter in the same place.[1] At first, deafening noises rent the air; soon after, many people reported how for several days they had seen two columns in battle, and, when the battle was over, they found as many

1 The prodigy is supposed to have occurred during the civil war in the year 85 B.C., not far from Capua.

footprints, like those of men and horses, as might be expected from so great an engagement.

Now, one point of the story—if the gods really fought against gods—is that civil wars among men cannot be condemned. Another is that such gods must be either malicious or miserable. If, on the other hand, the fight was a mere sham, it had no purpose but to make the Romans believe that, when they broke out in civil strife, they did no wrong, since the gods had given the example. The civil wars had already begun, heralded by sundry battles and unspeakably savage massacres. Already, a tragic episode had struck horror into many. A soldier, while stripping the spoils off a slain foe, saw that the body was that of his own brother. With a curse against fratricidal wars, he turned the sword upon himself and fell by his brother's side.

To the end that men might not feel the horror of such abominations, but that their lust for criminal wars might be kindled to greater frenzy, the malignant spirits, whom the Romans took for gods and thought worthy of honor and worship, willed to appear before men as fighting with one another. Thus, with the spectacle of battling gods before them, Romans would not be deterred by love of country from initiating similar conflicts, but would rather see human villainy condoned by the example of the gods. It was the same cunning which the unclean devils used when they demanded stage plays to be performed in their honor, in which, as I have pointed out, the scandals of the gods were exhibited before men's eyes, both in the musical pantomimes and in dramatizations of fables. Whether the spectator believed that the gods really did such things or not, he nevertheless knew that the gods were immensely pleased to have their villainies performed and that, therefore, he could do likewise without qualm.

Lest any man think that whenever the poets tell of the fighting gods they are penning rebukes rather than encomiums, the gods themselves, in order to deceive men, set the seal of approval on their songs. They did so not only by having their battles portrayed by the actors on the stage, but by doing their own fighting in open field before men's eyes.

We have felt bound to say this because their own authors had frankly declared and written that, because of the depraved morals of the Roman citizens, the republic had gone to pieces, leaving no trace of its old self, long before the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. This disaster they refuse to blame on their gods, but they blame on our Christ the passing ills to which men never yield in life or death. While our Christ constantly inculcates lofty precepts to uphold good morals and to denounce evil ones, the gods issued no such precepts to the people who worshiped them and did nothing to save the republic from doom. On the contrary, by their example they gave, in a sense, wicked approval to the corruption of those morals, and thus did everything to destroy the republic.

There is no one, I hope, who will dare any longer to assert that the republic fell into ruin because the gods 'departed and left the temples and the altars bare,' on the ground that, being friends of virtue, they were repelled by the vices of men. For, by the fact that no end of auspices, auguries, and divinations revealed them as boasting of their foresight and as abettors of war, they stand convicted of having remained where they were. If they had really departed, the Romans in their civil wars would have been led merely by their passions and would have been less savage than they were under the spur of the demons' instigations.

Chapter 26

This being the case, one question needs answering. Openly and without concealment, the bestial indecencies, crimes, and misdeeds of the gods were paraded before the people to be seen and to be taken as patterns of life. This was done at the instance of the gods themselves, who threatened the penalty of their wrath if those spectacles were not consecrated to their honor, at regular intervals, with all pomp and circumstance. By the pleasure they take in such abominations, the demons prove themselves to be unclean spirits. By the revelation of their vices and infamous actions, they avow themselves to be the inciters of scandalous and unclean living. It was they who solicited from the brazen actor class the formal representation of these depravities real or imaginary, and forced it upon decent people. How, then, can anyone think, in face of all this, that these devils impart certain precepts of good morals to a chosen coterie of saints, so to speak, in their holy of holies and in the secret recesses of their temples?

If this is true, there is all the more reason to recognize and unmask the malice of these unclean spirits. So powerful is the attraction of the virtue of purity that practically every human being is pleased to hear it praised, and no one is so sunk in depravity as to have lost all sense of decency. Hence, unless the malignity of the demons somewhere 'transformeth itself into an angel of light,'[1] as we read in our Scripture, it cannot carry out its business of deception.

So it happens that, in public, impious impurity shouts into people's ears with noisy din, while in private, hidden chastity is scarcely heard of even by a few. For depravity there is

1 2 Cor. 11.14.

notoriety; for decency, only concealment. Decency goes into hiding; indecency goes on parade. Evil action summons a mob; a good discourse scarcely finds a handful of listeners. It is as though virtue were matter for shame, and vice for boasting. Such is the perversion in the temples of the demons, in those haunts of deceit. The esoteric instructions are to ensnare the decent few; the public worship is to keep the immoral majority from reform.

I do not know when or where the elect of the goddess Caelestis ever heard any maxims of chastity. This I do know. Before the temple gates where I saw her idol standing, the mob poured in from all sides, each one finding room wherever he could elbow himself in. I was all eyes and ears for the plays that were being enacted. My morbid gaze shifted from one side to the other, now falling on a procession of strumpets, now on the virgin goddess, now on the humble supplications being addressed to her, now on the foul antics being enacted before her face. I saw no modest actors, no actions that had a touch of shame. Every honor was done to obscenity. Everyone knew what gratified the whim of the virgin goddess, and an exhibition was put on in the temple that gave even experienced matrons something to take home. Some women turned in shame from the filthy gestures of the actors, learning the artistry of vice only by furtive glances.

They felt abashed before men to gaze openly on the impure motions, yet they did not dare, with a pure heart, to reprobate the rites of the goddess they worshiped. In the temple those obscenities were openly taught which, at home, are done only in the dark. The only wonder for a decent-minded man—if there were any—was that there should be any remorse when men practice those indecencies which the gods were so eager to have acted on the open stage as a part

of religion and, in fact, become angry when they are not performed.

What other spirit inflames minds with a secret itch to commit adulteries, and gloats over them when commited, except one who finds delight in such celebrations? Such a spirit it is which sets up diabolical idols in the temples, and in the plays loves the images of vices; which whispers words of righteousness in secret in order to deceive the virtuous few, while in the open multiplies incitements to depravity in order to drag to itself the mass of wicked men.

Chapter 27

Tullius, a man of importance though a poor philosopher, about to assume the edileship, shouts into the citizens' ears that among the duties of his office is that of appeasing the Mother Flora by a festival of plays[1]—the piety of whose performance, I may add, is usually in proportion to their lewdness. In another place,[2] speaking at a time when he was consul and the state was facing a most dangerous crisis, he informs us that these plays went on for ten days on end, and that nothing was left undone which was calculated to propitiate the gods. Thereby it is suggested that it was better to placate gods of that kind with debauchery than anger them with continence; to soothe them with unbounded lewdness than to enrage them with decency.

Enemies, with all their beastly ferocity, could not inflict more harm than gods inflicted by the unspeakable foulness they demanded as an appeasement for keeping the enemy at bay. In order to avert the menace to the body, the gods were

1 *Contra Verrem* 5.14.
2 *In Catilinam* 3.8.

placated by the defeat of virtue in the soul. They would make no defense against enemies storming men's walls until they themselves had ruined men's wills.

The performers of these propitiatory orgies, so wanton, impure, shameless, wicked, and foul, were disfranchised, ostracized, and branded with infamy by the admirable moral instinct of ancient Rome; yet the orgies themselves, so shameful, revolting, and repugnant to true religion, the seductive and slanderous fables about the gods, and their actions, whether villainously and foully committed or more villainously and foully feigned for the public to see and hear—all these the mass of citizens were taught to drink in. Seeing that they delighted the gods, the Romans believed that they should not only be performed in their honor, but also be imitated. At the same time, the people learned nothing of the supposed lessons in good morals imparted to the few and with such secrecy—if imparted at all. It was feared not so much that the lessons would be followed in practice as that they would become common knowledge.

Chapter 28

People are wicked and thankless who grumble and complain against being delivered from the hellish yoke of these unclean powers, and from the penalty for keeping such company. People complain against being led out of the dark night of ruinous unbelief into the light of life-giving faith. Fast in the grip of the malign spirit, they grumble because other people stream into the church to render a pure worship to God, where, for modesty's sake, men are on one side and women on the other. These other people hear how to live their brief span on earth virtuously and, after this life, to live happily forever. There, from an elevation within everyone's

view, are expounded the words of Holy Scripture and the doctrine of righteous living, and how those who put them into practice receive their reward, and those who refuse to do so listen to their damnation.

Though some may come to mock the precepts they hear, they will either experience an unexpected change of heart and lay aside their insolence or, out of sheer awe and shame, they will restrain it. In the place where the commandments of the true God are preached, His miracles related, His bounties praised, and His graces implored, no foul or scandalous deed will be set before them to look at and to imitate.

Chapter 29

Why, then, do not you Romans with your noble character, you sons of the Reguli, Scaevolae, Scipii, and Fabricii, let your hearts go out to these better things. Look at the difference between these things and the base arrogance and deceiving wickedness of the demons. However great and good your natural gifts may be, it takes true piety to make them pure and perfect; with impiety, they merely end in loss and pain. Choose now your course, not to seek glory in yourself, but to find it infallibly in the true God. At one time, you could enjoy the applause of your people, but by God's mysterious providence the true religion was not there for you to choose.

But, it is now day; awake as you awoke in the persons of those men in whose sterling virtue and sufferings for the faith we glory. They battled on all sides against hostile powers and, conquering by their fearless death, 'have purchased this country for us with their blood.'[1] To this Country we plead-

1 *Aeneid* 11.24,25.

ingly invite you. Join its citizens, for it offers more than mere sanctuary, it offers the true remission of your sins.

Give no heed to the degenerate progeny who blame Christ and Christians for what they call bad times, and long for times which assure them, not a peaceful life, but undisturbed wickedness. Such times were never to your liking, not even for an earthly fatherland. Reach out now for the heavenly country. You will have very little to suffer for it, and in it you will reign in very truth, and forever. In that land there is no Vestal altar, no statue of Jupiter on the Capitol, but the one true God, who 'will not limit you in space or time, but will give an empire universal and eternal.'[2] Seek no false and lying gods; rather, cast them from you with scorn and shine forth in true freedom. They are not gods, but fiendish spirits, to whom your eternal happiness is a torment. Never did Juno so intensely begrudge the Trojans, your ancestors in the flesh, the battlements of Rome, as do those demons, whom you still fancy to be gods, begrudge an everlasting home to the whole human race.

You have already, in part, passed judgment on these spirits, for, while you placated them with stage plays, you branded with infamy the actors who performed them. Let your freedom assert its rights against the unclean spirits who have placed upon you the obligation of solemnly exhibiting their shame as though it were a holy thing.

You took civic rights away from performers of Olympian scandals. Now, beseech the true God to take away from you those gods who delight in immoralities—in lust, if the sins are facts; in lying, if they are feigned. You did well to ostracize the mimes and mummers from civil society. Keep a

2 *Ibid.* 1.278,279.

sharper watch now. Divine majesty is in no way appeased by arts which dishonor man's dignity. How, then, can you place in the ranks of the holy powers of heaven gods who delight in homage so unclean, while you banned from the lowest ranks of Roman citizens the men who enacted such homage?

Glorious beyond compare is the heavenly city. There, victory is truth, dignity is holiness, peace is happiness, life is eternity. If you blushed to tolerate that sort of men among your citizens, how much less will the heavenly city tolerate that sort of gods? Wherefore, if you long to reach that blessed country, shun the company of demons. Gods who are propitiated by infamous rites are unworthy of the worship of decent men. Deny religious rites to the gods, by a Christian reform, just as you denied civil dignity to the actors, by the censor's decree.

As regards earthly happiness and physical evils which alone the wicked wish to enjoy or refuse to endure, I shall show in the sequel that not even over these have those demons the control people imagine. Indeed, even if they did have, then we should scorn those things rather than, for their sake, worship those gods and so fail to attain the blessings they begrudge us. However, not even over those things have demons the power attributed to them by those who maintain that they must on that account be propitiated. But, as I said, more of this later. Here, I bring this book to a close.

BOOK III

Chapter 1

IT SEEMS TO ME I have already said enough about the evils which work havoc on men's souls and morals, and which they must shun at all costs. I have shown that, far from having done aught to save their worshipers from the miseries that lay heavy upon them, the false gods did their utmost to increase the burden beyond endurance.

I must now turn to those calamities which are the only things our accusers have no wish to endure. Such are hunger, disease, war, plunder, imprisonment, massacre, and horrors such as I have mentioned in Book I. Though these do not make men evil, evildoers regard them as the only evil. Yet, they feel no shame that they themselves are evil amid the things they praise as good. They are more pained if their villa is poor than if their life is bad, as though man's greatest good were to have everything good except himself.

The fact is that the gods did not ward off the evils which pagans dread, even at a time when they were freely worshiped. At various times and in different places before the coming of our Redeemer, calamities beyond counting and description were scourging mankind. Yet, what others besides your recreant gods did the world worship? I except, of course, the Hebrew nation, and a few individuals beyond its pale, wherever by God's grace and His secret and righteous judgment they were found worthy.

Not to enlarge too much, I shall say nothing of the dreadful afflictions which other people have everywhere suffered. Confining myself to Rome alone and to the Roman Empire,

that is, to the city itself and to the people linked with it either by alliance or by subjection, I shall speak of the visitations they experienced before the coming of Christ, but after their incorporation into the Roman body politic.

Chapter 2

To begin with, there is the case of Troy, or Ilium, the cradle of the Roman people. Though I alluded to this in the first Book, I must not omit it or ignore it here. Troy had and worshiped the Roman gods. Why, then, was it conquered, captured, and destroyed by the Greeks? Pagans, of course, will reply that Priam had to pay the price for his father Laomedon's perjury.[1] If so, Apollo and Neptune must have given mercenary aid to Laomedon. He pledged them pay, so it is said, and then went back on his word. That is most remarkable! To think that Apollo, who is called the Seer, should engage in so vast a venture and not know that Laomedon would default in his promise! Nor does it reflect credit on Neptune himself, his uncle, Jupiter's brother, and King of the Sea, to have been in the dark about the future. Yet, Homer, the poet who is said to have lived before Rome's foundation, represents this divinity to us as uttering a momentous prophecy about the race of Aeneas, whose progeny founded Rome, and whom Neptune, as Homer tells us, snatched up in a cloud to save him from the murderous sword of Achilles, although, as Virgil avows,

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1 Priam's father, Laomedon, violated a pledge he had given to Poseidon (or Neptune) and Apollo, and this perjury was reckoned the real cause of Troy's fall. Cf. *Iliad* 21.441-460; Horace, *Odes* 4.3.18-24; *Aeneid* 4.542; *Georgics* 1.502.

All his will was to destroy
His own creation, perjured Troy.[2]

So, we have the spectacle of two mighty divinities, Neptune and Apollo, unable to tell that Laomedon was going to cheat them of their pay, building up the walls of Troy—and all for nothing but ingratitude. Pagans should reflect whether it is really not more criminal to believe in such gods than to violate one's oath to them. Homer himself has not given easy credence to the fable, for, while on the one hand he represents Neptune battling against the Trojans, on the other he has Apollo fighting for them, in spite of the fact that, as the fable runs, both took offense at the perjury. Hence, if they so swallow the fables, they should blush for worshiping that sort of deities; if they do not swallow them, then they should not appeal to the Trojans' perjury, or should at least find it strange that the gods should punish perjury on the part of the Trojans and welcome it with pleasure on the part of the Romans.

How could it possibly happen that, 'in a state so great and so sunk in corruption,' Catiline's conspiracy could count a large number of those 'who made their living by hand and tongue plying perjury and murder of their fellow citizens'?[3] How else can you explain the fact that bribery so often stole the decisions of Senators, and so often the vote of the citizens, both at the polls and in certain cases that were tried before them in public assemblies, except that they, too, resorted to the crime of perjury? For, even when, amid the general let-down of morals, the ancient custom of taking oath was retained, that was not to restrain people from wrong-doing through religious awe, but in order to add perjury to their other crimes.

2 *Aeneid* 5.810,811.
3 Sallust, *Catilina* 14.1.

Chapter 3

In view of all this, there is no basis for thinking that the gods—allegedly the 'pillars of the empire'[1] but manifestly beaten by the greater might of the Greeks—were aroused to anger by the Trojans' perjury. Nor did the adultery of Paris—sometimes alleged to justify their abandoning Troy—kindle their wrath. For, as a rule, they are the perpetrators and teachers of evil, not its avengers. 'As I have learned the story,' writes Sallust, 'in the beginning the city of Rome was founded and possessed by the Trojans, who, led by Aeneas, wandered about as refugees with no fixed home.'[2] If, therefore, the gods thought fit to avenge the adultery of Paris, they should have visited their penalties more on the Romans, or at least equally on them, since it was the mother of Aeneas who comitted that crime.

But, how could they detest the misdeed in Paris when they did not detest the adultery of his associate Venus with Anchises (to mention no others) by whom she begot Aeneas? Was it because the former was comitted in the face of Menelaus' wrath; the latter, with Vulcan's connivance? I suppose the gods are not jealous of their wives to the extent of not deigning to share them with men! But, perhaps I may seem to be scoffing at these fables, and not treating so weighty a matter with due seriousness.

Well, then, if you please, let us suppose that Aeneas was not the son of Venus. I agree to that, provided it be also admitted that neither was Romulus the son of Mars. If the one be true, why not the other? Or is it licit for gods to consort casually with the wives of mortals and illicit for mortal

1 Cf. *Aeneid* 2.352.
2 *Catilina* 6.

men to do the same with goddesses? Those are hard, or rather incredible, terms: that what was lawful to Mars by Venus' law should not be lawful to Venus by her own law. But, both have the support of Roman authority, for, in times nearer to us, Caesar was no less convinced that he was descended from Venus than was Romulus that Mars was his father.

Chapter 4

Someone may say to me: 'Do you believe all that stuff?' My answer is that I do not. Even one of the most learned pagans, Varro, if not with outright decisiveness and confidence, still cautiously avows that all this is sheer nonsense. For all that, he affirms that it is expedient for states that men of valor should claim divine lineage, however shallow the pretence. This is on the theory that, by that sublime fiction, the human spirit, urged on by the self-assurance of being divinely born, will venture into great exploits and, by the confidence such illusion inspires, achieve more signal success.

You cannot but observe how wide a door this view, which I have summarized in my own words, would open to sham and false pretence. This is especially so where lies even about the gods are regarded as advantageous to the people. Endless fictions will be invented, and invested with a so-called sacred and religious character.

Chapter 5

We may pass over without discussion the question whether Venus could possibly have borne Aeneas as a a result of her liaison with Anchises, or whether Mars could have begotten Romulus from his intimacy with Numitor's daughter. A very

similar question arises even in our own Scriptures as to whether the fallen angels committed fornication with the 'daughters of men,'[1] which brought into being a race of giants, men of extraordinary size and strength, who increased and peopled the earth. Let us argue both cases as one. If the adulteries we read about concerning Aeneas' mother and Romulus' father be true, how can the gods take offense at the adulteries of men, since they take such things as a matter of course among themselves? Even if the tales are untrue, the gods should not become angered at the real adulteries of men, since they are pleased to have false ones attributed to themselves. Besides, if the misconduct of Mars is discredited for the sake of saving Venus, then no divine seduction can excuse the mother of Romulus.

Further, she was a priestess of Vesta, and for that reason the gods were bound to wreak greater vengeance upon the Romans for her sacrilege than upon the Trojans for the adultery of Paris. The ancient Romans buried alive any Vestal priestesses caught in adultery, although they never punished by death other women guilty of the same crime. Thus, they inflicted severer penalties on what they regarded as the desecration of the shrines of the gods than on the violation of the marriage bond among men.

Chapter 6

Here is another instance. If the crimes of mortals angered the gods so much that, when offended by the act of Paris, they abandoned Troy to destruction by fire and sword, then the murder of Romulus' brother should have incensed them against the Romans—and much more than the deception of

1 Gen. 6.4.

a Greek husband did against the Trojans. Surely, fratricide in a newly founded state should have provoked them more than adultery in a state already established in power. Moreover, it is irrelevant whether Romulus ordered the murder, or committed it with his own hand—as many boldly deny, or doubt in shame, or dissemble in sorrow. I need not delay, therefore, in examining in detail testimonies of many writers already verified. One thing is certain: Romulus' brother was slain neither by open enemies nor by strangers.

Whether Romulus himself committed the murder or merely ordered its commission, the fact is that he was more fully master of the Romans than Paris was of the Trojans. Why, then, did the seducer of another man's wife kindle the wrath of the gods, while the murderer of his own brother begged for the Romans the protection of the gods? If that crime was not committed by Romulus directly or indirectly, it still cried aloud for vengeance, and, since the whole state treated it as a light matter, the whole state committed the crime. Thus, the state slew not merely a brother, but, even worse, a father. The one brother was as much the founder of the state as the other; when one was removed by the crime, the other was thereby barred from becoming ruler.

I do not think there is any way of telling for what guilt Troy deserved to be abandoned by the gods and come to ruin, or for what good Rome deserved to become their abode and be set on the road to prosperity. Perhaps it was because the gods fled in defeat and betook themselves to the people they were to dupe and mislead. Or, better, they remained on the site of Troy to deceive the new settlers, according to their custom, while here in Rome, having greater scope for lying tricks, they were given greater honors and glory.

Chapter 7

In the first fury of the civil wars, what wrong had Troy committed to deserve a destruction at the hands of Fimbria,[1] the worst scoundrel on Marius' side, more savage and cruel than that formerly wrought by the Greeks? In the earlier calamity, many took to flight and many others were taken captive and allowed to live, at least in slavery. But, Fimbria issued an order to spare no one, and then fired the entire city with everyone in it. All this Troy had to suffer—not from the Greeks incensed by Trojan wickedness, but from the Romans, who had reaped success from Troy's misfortune. The gods who guarded them both brought no aid to avert disasters; rather, to tell the truth, they were utterly powerless to do so.

Did the gods, even at that time, 'depart and leave the temples and altars bare'—gods who had kept the city standing after it had arisen from the ashes and ruins in which the Greeks had left it? But, if they had already departed, I would like to know why. I find the conduct of the inhabitants as laudable as that of the gods is blameworthy. The Trojans had closed the gates against Fimbria in order to hold the city intact for Sulla. That is why Fimbria not merely fired the city, with its inhabitants, but utterly wiped it out. Sulla was still leader of the more respectable party, and he was still making every effort to deliver the republic by force of arms. He had not yet sensed the tragic outcome of these auspicious beginnings. Could the people of that city have done anything more proper, honorable, loyal, and more worthy of their kinship with Rome than to hold the city for the more patri-

1 C. Flavius Fimbria, friend of Marius in the civil war and commander in Asia until his suicide in 84 B.C.

otic Roman party and to shut its gates in the face of the betrayer of the Roman state?

How tragically this loyal act turned out for the Trojans, let the champions of the gods observe. It is urged that the gods deserted the adulterers and left Troy to the torches of the Greeks so that, from its ashes, a chaster Rome might arise. Then, why did they later desert the same city when it was bound to Rome by ties of kinship, and had not risen in revolt against Rome, its noble daughter, but had kept its faith staunchly and devotedly with its more legitimate party? Why did they then leave it to be wiped out, not by the valorous Greeks, but by the vilest creature that ever bore a Roman name?

If the gods frowned on the cause which was upheld by Sulla's party and which made the unfortunate Trojans hold the city with closed gates, why did the gods promise and predict such happy prospects for this same Sulla? Do they not reveal in this their true colors as flatterers of the fortunate rather than defenders of the downcast. Hence, not even then was it because the gods departed that Troy was overthrown. For the demons, ever ready to deceive, did all they could.

Together with the city, all the statues of idols went down in ashes and ruins except the statue of Minerva. According to Livy,[2] this remained intact in spite of the total destruction of her temple. This was not that it might be said in their praise: 'ye patron gods that always Troy protect,'[3] but that it might not be urged in their defence that 'the gods departed and left temples and the altars bare.' They were allowed to save that statue, not as proof of their power, but of their presence there.

2 In one of the lost books of Livy.
3 *Aeneid* 9.247.

Chapter 8

After the tragic lesson of Troy, was it a wise decision to entrust the protection of Rome to the gods of Ilium? It may be answered that, by the time Troy fell before Fimbria's onslaught, the gods had already taken up their permanent abode in Rome. How, then, explain the preservation of Minerva's image? If they were in Rome when Fimbria razed Troy, I presume they were in Troy when the Gauls seized and set fire to Rome itself! Having extremely sharp ears and extremely fast legs, at the scream of the geese they were back in a flash to protect at least the Capitoline Hill, which had escaped capture. Too bad that the warning to return was heard too late to save the rest of the city!

Chaper 9

It is also a matter of common belief that the gods gave their aid to Numa Pompilius, Romulus' successor. The result was that, during his entire reign, peace reigned with him, and the gates of the Temple of Janus, ordinarily open in time of war, were closed. The reason alleged is that the king established many sacred rites for the Romans. Certainly, that distinguished man deserves our congratulations for so long a peace. But, it is a pity that he failed to put it to good use, and that, instead of indulging in harmful experiment, he did not seek the true God in all sincerity. In truth, the gods did not bestow that peaceful interval, but perhaps they would not have made such a dupe of him, had they not found him so idle. The less busy they found him, the more busy they became. We learn from Varro how Numa schemed, and what tricks he used to associate such gods with him and with his

kingdom. But, God willing, I shall discuss that in more detail in the proper place.[1]

Since we are here dealing with their alleged favors of the gods, let it be granted that peace is indeed a great blessing. But, it is a blessing which, like sun and rain and other necessities of life, the true God bestows even on the ungrateful and the wicked. Now, if those gods conferred so priceless a blessing upon Rome under Pompilius, why did they never vouchsafe it to the Roman Empire even when most deserving of commendation? Were the sacrifices more effective when first introduced than when offered afterwards?

At first, they did not exist, and were therefore instituted; later, they did exist, and were preserved for the good they might do. But, how is one to explain the phenomenon that the forty-three,[2] or, as some would have it, thirty-nine years of Numa's reign enjoyed unbroken peace, while after that, in the long stretch of years from Rome's beginnings to Augustus, only the single year after the First Punic War can be recorded—and that as an outstanding miracle—in which the Romans could shut the gates of the war temple.[3] Note that the sacrifices had already been instituted, and the gods themselves had been installed, those gods whom the sacrifices invited to assume the supervision and protection of the commonwealth.

Chapter 10

The pagans will probably reply that the Roman Empire could not have attained its vast extent and achieved a glory

1 Cf., below, VII 34.
2 From 715 to 673, according to Livy (1.21).
3 The First Punic War lasted from 264 to 241 B.C. The Temple of Janus was closed in 235.

so great except by constant warfare. A fitting answer, indeed! To become great, must the Empire be in a turmoil? Is it not better for men's bodies to be of moderate stature and be healthy than to be gigantic and chronically diseased? Having attained that size, they know no rest; the larger the limbs, the sharper the pangs that torment them. What would have been the harm, or, rather, would it not have been for the best, had those times endured to which Sallust refers? He says, 'In the beginning, the kings (the first title by which rulers were known) varied in character. Some cultivated mental powers; others, physical strength. Yet, men lived their lives undisturbed by greed, each content with his own.'[1] In order to extend the Empire so widely, need that have happened which Virgil deprecates when he says: 'Little by little a more wicked and degenerate age crept in, with the fury of war and greed for wealth.'[2]

It will be urged that the Romans had an obviously just reason for all the wars that were declared and waged, since the enemy fell upon them with force, and not thirst for human glory but sheer necessity to protect their lives and liberty drove them to self-defense. Well, let that 'obviously' pass. This is what Sallust writes:

> 'After the commonwealth of the Romans had, through good laws, morals, and increase of territory, achieved a measure of success and power, its wealth, as often happens among men, became the object of other people's envy. Sure enough, neighboring kings and tribes began to attack the Romans. A few of their allies came to their

1 *Catilina* 2.
2 *Aeneid* 8.326,327.

aid; the rest, struck with fear, kept far from danger. But the Romans, both at home and in the army, diligently hastened preparations, encouraged one another, and marched against the enemy to protect their freedom, their country, and their king. Having warded off danger by their valor, they brought aid to their allies and friends, seeking to form friendships by conferring, rather than by receiving, benefits.'[3]

By such intelligent industry did Rome develop its power.

But, while Numa reigned, was it the invasions and provocations to war by aggressors that brought about the long period of peace, or did that peace endure because there was no threat of attack? Even then, Rome was provoked to war, yet she did not counter-attack. By continuing to adopt this policy of conciliating enemies without crushing them in battle or striking fear into them by an armed attack, Rome might always have ruled in peace and have kept the gates of Janus forever closed. If this was impossible, then it follows that Rome enjoyed peace, not because the gods willed it, but merely so long as neighbors on the frontier willed not to goad her into war. Unless, of course, we suppose that gods of this type have gall enough to sell to a man something that lies in a third party's power.

It is worth noting up to what point the wickedness of the demons is permitted to alarm or to sway wills that are wicked. For, if they always had such power, and there were no higher and more mysterious powers to counteract their plots, they could always control matters of peace as well as military victories, for such events are almost invariably shaped and

3 *Catilina* 2.

carried into effect by human wills. That more often than not such events occur in spite of the wishes of the gods is a fact attested not only by the fables which, for all their lies, may hint at or symbolize an element of truth, but also by Roman history itself.

Chapter 11

It was because the god was helpless that, as the fables tell us, the statue of Apollo at Cumae shed tears for four days while the Romans were waging war against the Achaeans and King Aristonicus.[1] Shocked by the prodigy, the soothsayers were about to fling the statue into the sea, when the elders of Cumae intervened. They related that the same mysterious phenomenon had been observed in the same statue when the Romans were at war with Antiochus[2] and the Persians.[3] They further affirmed that, because the Romans were victorious, gifts were sent to their Apollo by a senatorial decree.

The soothsayers, considered expert in these matters, were called on to explain. They answered that the reason why the tears shed by Apollo's statue meant victory for the Romans was that Cumae was a colony of Greek origin, and that the weeping Apollo portended disaster and humiliation for the country whence he had come, Greece itself. Shortly there-

1 The reference seems to be to the Fourth Macedonian War (149-146), but in that case the mention of Aristonicus is out of place. The MSS. vary from *Aristonicum* and *Stratonicum* to *Tratonicum* and *Istratinicum*. Is it possible that the original reading was *Andriscum*? Andriscus, a pretended son of Perseus, the hero of the Third Macedonian War, provoked the Fourth and was defeated by Q. Caecilius Metellus.

2 Antiochus III invaded Greece in 192, but was defeated by M. Acilius Glabrio and M. Porcius Cato in Thessaly in 191.

3 Perseus, successor of Philip V of Macedon, was defeated at the Battle of Pydna (168 B.C.) by L. Aemilius Paullus.

after, news came that King Aristonicus had been defeated and captured, a defeat which, of course, deeply displeased and grieved Apollo, as the tears of the marble image declared. Hence, the descriptions of the poets give us of the habits of the demons are not altogether fantastic, and, though fabulous in character, do contain something like the truth. Thus, we read in Virgil how Diana sorrowed over Camilla[4] and how Hercules wept at the prospect of the slaying of Pallas.[5] So, perhaps, with Numa Pompilius himself. He enjoyed peace, but without knowing or caring who was the bestower of that gift. In his idle moments he began to consider to what gods he might entrust the security and kingdom of Rome. He did not think that the true, omnipotent, and supreme God concerned Himself about earthly affairs. On the other hand, he remembered that the Trojan gods which Aeneas had brought with him had proved powerless to preserve for any length of time either the realm of Troy or that of Lavinium, which Aeneas himself had founded. So, he thought best to provide other deities, whose duty it would be to stand by the older gods (some of whom had come to Rome with Romulus, and others had passed over after the destruction of Alba), either as guardians of deserters, or as assistants of weaklings.

Chapter 12

Rome was not content with the many rites and sacrifices established by Numa, for the great temple of Jupiter had not yet been erected. It was King Tarquin who built the Capitoline. Aesculapius of Epidaurus managed to get to Rome.[1]

4 *Aeneid* 11.836-849.
5 *Ibid.* 10.457-469.

1 The cult was introduced in 293 B.C.

He was a skilled physician, and he wanted to be in the celebrated city to practice his profession with greater renown. Then, the Mother of the gods migrated to Rome from some out-of-the-way place called Pessinus.[2] For, of course, it was beneath her dignity to lurk in obscurity while her son was enthroned on the Capitoline. The Mother of all the gods followed some of her children to Rome, but she got there ahead of the others. I should be a bit surprised, though, if she really give birth to dog-headed Cynocephalus, who came from Egypt much later. Whether the goddess Fever was also one of her children, I leave it to Aesculapius, her great-grandson, to say. But, whatever her origin, I do not suppose that the immigrant gods will dare declare a goddess of low birth is a citizen of Rome.

It would be hard to count this horde of divinities—native and foreign, heavenly and earthly, gods of the sea, of the fountains, of the rivers, and, as Varro says, gods definite and dubious, and in every category, male and female, even among animals. Under the protecting shield of such an army of gods, Rome should never have been troubled and afflicted by that frightful succession of disasters, of which I shall mention but a few.

The smoke from innumerable sacrifices that went up like a signal of distress showed that Rome had assembled too many gods for her protection. By instituting and assigning temples, altars, sacrifices, and priests for their service, Rome provoked the anger of the true and all-highest God, to whom alone this worship is properly due. Actually, she led a happier life with fewer gods. But, as she grew in extent, she felt

2 Cybele was worshiped at Pessinus in Asia Minor. For the transportation of her statue to Rome, cf. Livy 29.10,11.

bound to employ more gods, like a bigger ship that employs more sailors. I suppose that Rome lost confidence in the fewer gods of old to sustain her in her greatness, though, in contrast to her more degenerate days, she enjoyed more prosperity under the lesser number. For, considering the old days under the kings, apart from Numa Pompilius, of whom I have already spoken, what a disaster was the strife that led to the murder of Romulus' brother!

Chapter 13

How was it that neither Juno who, along with her husband Jupiter, 'cherished Rome's lording sons, the nation of the gown'[1] nor Venus herself, was able to help the descendants of Venus' son, Aeneas, to be worthy of decent and honorable marriages? Was the lack of women so great that the Romans had to snatch them by fraud and be forced to battle with their fathers-in-law? The tragic result was that the wretched women, still smarting from the wrong their husbands did them, were dowered by their fathers' blood. The Romans beat their neighbors in this battle, but at what a price for victory—blood and the burial of kinsmen and neighbors! With deep emotion and justifiable sorrow does Lucan bewail 'the worse than civil wars in the Emathian plains, and right surrendering to wrong'[2] when a single father-in-law, Caesar, and one son-in-law, Pompey, lost Julia, Caesar's daughter and Pompey's wife.[3]

Thus did the Romans win in battle. With hands bloodied by the slaughter of fathers-in-law, they forced sorrowful em-

1 *Aeneid* 1.281,282.
2 *Pharsalia* 1.2.
3 Julia died in 54 B.C., while her father was in Britain.

braces from daughters who dared not mourn dead fathers out of fear of angering victorious husbands. While the battle raged, the women looked on, not knowing for whose victory to pray. Nuptials of that kind are Bellona's, not Venus', gift to the Romans. Or, perhaps, Allecto, that hellish fury, now that Juno favored their side, had had more power against the Romans than when, at Juno's bidding, she was goaded against Aeneas.[4]

Andromache was happier in captivity than those brides of the Romans in their married lot. For, though Pyrrhus forced Andromache to embrace him, at least he shed no more Trojan blood; but the Romans massacred in war the fathers whose daughters they had taken as their wives. Andromache, slave to the victor, had only to mourn the dead without fear of further bloodshed. The Sabine women, wives to men at war, feared the death of their fathers when the husbands left, mourned the dead when they returned, yet could give no free expression to fears or sorrows. They were faced with the tragic alternative either dutifully to mourn the slaying of tribesmen, kinsmen, brothers and parents, or to take a callous delight in their husbands' victories. To add to their grief, in the shifting fortunes of battle, some lost husbands by the swords of kinsmen, some lost both husbands and kin when each was slain by the other.

Nor was the peril less on the Roman side when the Sabines laid siege to the city and the Romans defended themselves behind closed gates. When the gates were opened by treachery, the enemy poured in, and in the Forum itself sons-in-law and fathers-in-law fell upon one another with the most savage ferocity. When the abductors were losing the day, they fled

4 *Aeneid* 7.323ff.

inside their houses, and thus stained with disgrace those previous victories, already sufficiently disgraceful and deplorable.

At this juncture, Romulus, losing faith in the valor of his Romans, implored Jupiter that they might stand fast—hence Jupiter's title of Stator. But, that would not have put an end to the slaughter had not the abducted women, with hair disheveled, rushed forward, and casting themselves at their fathers' feet, appeased their all too just anger, not with victorious arms, but with filial supplications.

Then, Romulus, who could not tolerate his brother's joint rule, was compelled to divide the kingdom with Titus Tatius, King of the Sabines. No one expected Romulus, who could not endure his twin brother, to suffer Tatius for any length of time. Tatius was slain, and Romulus, with an eye to becoming a greater god, obtained sole rule over the kingdom.

What sort of nuptial rites are these, what sort of occasions for wars, what bonds of brotherhood, kinship, or alliance, what claims to divinity? Finally, what a political life entrusted to such a mob of divinities! You can realize how much else could be said, if matters I must yet treat of did not urge me to pass on without delay.

Chapter 14

How did things go under the kings who followed Numa? How disastrous both to themselves and to the Romans was the war to which the Albani were provoked because the long peace Numa achieved had become of small account to the Romans! How repeatedly did both the Roman and the Alban troops slaughter one another, with a consequent weakening of their respective cities! The celebrated Alba, which

Ascanius,[1] son of Aeneas, founded, and which might, in a truer sense than Troy, be called the mother of Rome, was drawn into war by King Tullus Hostilius.[2] Plunging into the struggle with Rome, both sides dealt out death till, after many battles, both sank from exhaustion.

It was agreed to decide the issue of war by trial of combat, three brothers being chosen from the one side, and three from the other. From the Romans the three Horatii came forward, and from the Albans the three Curiatii. Two Horatii were vanquished and slain by the three Curiatii, but the three Curiatii suffered the same fate at the hands of the third Horatius. So, Rome came off the victor, even in this last battle, at the cost of slaughter—only one out of six returned. On both sides, the loss and the tears were those of the race of Aeneas, of the descendants of Ascanius, the offspring of Venus, the grandchildren of Jupiter! In this worse than a civil war, a daughter city fought against the mother city.

On the heels of this battle of the bands of brothers followed another horrible and ghastly tragedy. Before the war, both communities had lived on friendly terms and, as was proper between neighbors and kinsmen, a sister of the Horatii married one of the Curiatii. After the battle, the wife saw her husband's arms as spoils in the possession of her brother. She burst into tears; thereupon, she was struck down by her brother. It seems to me that this one woman's feelings were more humane than those of all the Roman people. I do not see any fault in her tears. How could there be? It was natural for her to weep over the husband to whom she had pledged troth—as it was, in a way, even for the brother who had slain

1 *Ibid.* 1.267-271.

2 The traditional dates are 673-641 B.C. for the reign of Tullus Hostilius.

the man to whom he had given his sister. That is why Virgil praises dutiful Aeneas for weeping over the enemy he had slain with his own hand.[3] That is why Marcellus[4] shed tears over Syracuse as he reflected how a city at the height of its glory had fallen at a stroke under his attack, and shared the common fate of all earthly things. If men can be commended for shedding tears over the enemies they conquered, then, in the name of natural affection, I beg indulgence for the woman who wept over the husband her brother had slain. Yet, while that unfortunate woman was mourning her husband killed by her brother, Rome was rejoicing over an incredibly destructive war against the mother city, over a victory paid for by torrents of blood, shed on both sides by her own kinsmen.

Do not speak to me of victory and of glory! Put foolish prejudice aside. See and weigh and judge the dreadful facts in their stark reality. Present the indictment against Alba as the rape of Helen was presented against Troy. There is no similarity between the two cases. All we can say is that 'Tullus kindled those wars to win his idle people back to war and to renew the discontinued triumphs of his troops.'[5] Such is the vice that occasioned the horrible crime of the civil and fratricidal war, although Sallust makes only a passing reference to it. Speaking briefly, with admiration, of the earlier times when men lived free from greed and every man was content with what he had, he says, 'But, when Cyrus in Asia, and the Spartans and Athenians in Greece, began to subjugate cities and peoples, then they began to hold lust for

3 *Aeneid* 10.821-828.

4 Marcus Claudius Marcellus (268-208 B.C.) invaded Sicily during the Second Punic War, and captured Syracuse in 212, in spite of the defenses prepared by Archimedes (287-212).

5 *Aeneid* 6.814,815.

domination as just cause for war, and to consider that their highest glory rested on the widest possible expansion of their frontiers!'[6] And so the passage continues, but, for my present purpose, these words are enough. That lust for power harasses and afflicts the human race with serious evils. Under the spell of this lust, Rome rejoiced over her conquest of Alba, and called boasting of her crime, glory. 'For the sinner is praised in the desires of his soul: and the unjust man is blessed,'[7] as our Holy Scriptures declare.

We should tear away screens and deceptive disguises, and examine facts with honest eyes. Let no one say to me: So and so was great because he fought and defeated so and so. Even gladiators fight; even gladiators win. Even their savagery receives the prize of applause. But, it seems to me preferable by far to pay any penalty inertia may bring rather than to seek the glory which wars like that can win. Suppose two gladiators marched into the arena to fight each other to the death, and one was the father, the other, his son—could any man endure it? Would any man not stop it if he could? How, then, could war between a mother and daughter city be reckoned glorious? Was this different from the gladiatorial combat because the battleground was not the narrower space of the arena, but vast plains heaped with the corpses, not of two gladiators, but of the numberless warriors of two nations; and because those battles were not fought within the confines of the amphitheatre, but were offered as an unholy spectacle to the world at large, before the eyes of men then living and of generations yet to come, as long as history should record the infamy?

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6 *Catilina* 2.

7 Ps. 9.24.

Yet, those tutelary deities of the Roman Empire, looking on as spectators of such bloody contests in a theatre, were avid for more. They were not sated till the sister of the Horatii was, by the sword of her own brother, sent to join the two slain Curiatii, that there might be three victims on each side, and that victorious Rome might have no fewer dead than defeated Alba. Then, that Rome might reap the full fruit of victory, Alba was razed to the ground—Alba where, after Troy, which the Greeks burnt to ashes, and after Lavinium, where Aeneas had set up a foreign and fugitive kingdom, the Trojan divinities had taken up their third abode.

But, perhaps, as was their custom, they had departed from Alba, and hence Alba was destroyed. The gods had gone, 'leaving the temples and altars bare'—those gods by whose aid that kingdom had endured. They had now departed for the third time, and with the greatest foresight, that Rome might be the fourth place entrusted to them. They were displeased with Alba, where Amulius reigned after driving out his brother; they were pleased with Rome, where Romulus reigned afetr murdering his brother. But, we are told that, before Alba was demolished, its inhabitants were transported to Rome, so as to make one city of the two.

Granted that such was the case, Alba, the mother city, seat of Ascanius and dwelling-place of the Trojan gods, was also destroyed by the daughter city. That the surviving remnants of the two populations might be united as one, the dreadful bond of union was sealed by the blood previously shed on both sides. I need not rehearse in detail how repeatedly, under the succeeding kings, the same wars flared up. Seemingly terminated by victory time and again, they were concluded in terrific slaughter. Peace treaty after peace

treaty, alliance after alliance, followed between fathers-in-law and sons-in-law, their children and their children's children; yet, after each, the same thing began all over again. Unmistakable proof of this dreadful state of affairs is the fact that no king ever shut the war gates. No king, therefore, with all the gods to protect him, ever knew what it was to reign in peace.

Chapter 15

How did the kings themselves end their careers? As for Romulus, you can choose between a flattering fable that he was received by the gods into heaven, or you can take the word of the Roman writers who relate that, when he was torn to pieces by the Senate because of his intolerable insolence, the Senate bribed a certain Julius Proculus to say that Romulus had appeared to him, charging him to tell the Roman people to give him divine honors. In this way the people were put down and pacified, after they had begun an insurrection against the Senate.

Then, there was an eclipse of the sun, which the simple-minded populace, not knowing that it was explainable by the sun's regular course, attributed to the power of Romulus. If the eclipse was taken as the sun in mourning, it would have been more natural for them to believe that Romulus had been murdered, and that, by the failing of the sun's light, the crime was revealed. That phenomenon did in truth occur when our Lord was crucified by the cruelty and impiety of the Jews. That this latter darkening of the sun was not caused by the normal course of the heavenly bodies is sufficiently proved by the fact that it occurred at the time of the Jewish Pasch. This is celebrated under a full moon, while a natural eclipse is possible only at the end of the lunar phase.

Cicero himself made it sufficiently clear that the reception of Romulus among the gods is a fiction rather than a fact. Even while paying a tribute to him in the *De re publica,* he says by the tongue of Scipio: 'His very name had such a hold on people's minds that, when he suddenly disappeared during an eclipse of the sun, it was commonly believed that he had been raised to fellowship with the gods, an honor no mortal man, unless he were a prodigy of virtue, could achieve.'[1] Surely, what Cicero says about his sudden disappearance is meant to imply either a violent storm or a well-concealed murder. Besides, other Roman writers add to the story of the eclipse the circumstance of a sudden thunderstorm, which could either have screened the murder or itself have killed him.

Speaking, in the same book, of Tullus Hostilius,, the third king after Romulus, who was also killed by lightning, Cicero states that people did not believe that Tullus was received among the gods after that kind of death because, presumably, the Romans would have cheapened what they believed (or were made to believe) about Romulus, if the same honor be too readily conceded to another. He also says quite openly in his charge against Catiline: 'We have placed Romulus, the founder of this city, in the rank of the gods, partly out of kindness, and partly because of popular opinion,'[2] implying that Romulus' assumption was not a fact, but, as a kindly reward for his virtues, a story that was spread far and wide. But, in his dialogue, the *Hortensius,* referring to the regular eclipses of the sun, he says: 'In order that the sun bring about the same darkness as at Romulus' death, which occurred

1 *De re publica* 2.10.
2 *In Catilinam* 3.1.

during an eclipse.' Here, where Cicero was writing a discussion, not a panegyric, he did not hesitate to treat the death of Romulus as that of an ordinary man.

As for the rest of the Roman kings, except Numa Pompilius and Ancus Martius, who died of illness, their deaths were unspeakably dreadful! Tullus Hostilius, the conqueror and destroyer of Alba, as I have already said, was, together with his whole household, burned to cinders by lightning. Priscus Tarquinius[3] was slain by his predecessor's sons. Servius Tullius was foully murdered by his son-in-law, Tarquinius Superbus, who succeeded him on the throne. Yet, after the horrible parricide committed against the worthiest king of the Romans, the gods had not 'gone and left the temples and the altars bare,' as they did when, outraged by Paris' rape of Helen, they abandoned wretched Troy to the torch and the sword of the Greeks. What is more, Tarquinius himself mounted the throne after shedding the blood of his father-in-law.

The gods saw this infamous parricide seize the throne over his father-in-law's body. They saw him elated by victory in many wars. They saw him build the capitol with the spoils of war. They did not depart; they were present, and remained to look on. They permitted their sovereign Jupiter to preside and rule over them in that lofty temple, the work of a kinsman's assassin. Nor must we imagine that Tarquinius was free from guilt when he built the Capitol and was only driven from the city for crimes committed later. On the contrary, it was by a monstrous crime that he entered upon that very reign during which he built the Capitol.

His subsequent expulsion and exclusion from the city were not because he had any part in the rape of Lucretia. This was

3 The traditional dates are: Tarquinius Priscus, 616-578; Servius Tullius, 578-534; Tarquinius Superbus, 534-510.

his son's crime, committed not only without his knowledge, but also in his absence—he was then besieging the city of Ardea, waging war for the Roman people. What action he would have taken had he learned of his son's villainy, we do not know. Yet, without inquiring or ascertaining what was in his mind, the people stripped him of his power. The army received orders to desert him, and, on its return to the city, the gates were shut and Tarquinius barred from returning.

However he continued to harass the Romans by arousing their neighbors against them. But, he was deserted by those on whose aid he relied and was unable to recover the throne. He retired to the town of Tusculum, near Rome, where, we are told, together with his wife, he spent fourteen years as a private citizen. Presumably, he died a more enviable death than that of his father-in-law, who, it is believed, was murdered by his daughter's husband, with her acquiescence. Yet, the Romans did not name him Tarquinius 'the Cruel' or 'the Criminal,' but 'the Proud,' probably because their own pride could not endure his insolent tyranny.

They made so little of his revolting murder of his father-in-law, their best king, as to make his murderer their ruler. I wonder whether so great a reward granted for so horrible a crime was not an even more infamous crime on their part. Nevertheless, the gods did not depart, 'leaving the temples and the altars bare.' Unless, perhaps, someone may possibly offer as defense for those gods the plea that they remained in Rome rather to inflict more effective punishment on the Romans than to aid them with favors, deluding them by hollow triumphs while crushing them by disastrous wars.

Under such conditions did the Romans lead their lives under the kings, during the happy times of the republic, till the expulsion of Tarquin the Proud. That period lasted for

243 years, during which, in spite of all those victories bought at the price of so much blood and so many disasters, that empire spread scarcely twenty miles beyond the walls of Rome. That falls far short of a territory which could compare with the present extent of any city of the Getuli.

Chapter 16

From the time of the kings let us now proceed to the subsequent period, when, according to the statement of Sallust, life was regulated by fair and equitable law 'until the fear inspired by Tarquinius and the hard-fought war with the Etruscans came to an end.' For as long as the Etruscans aided Tarquinius' attempts to re-enter the kingdom, Rome was shaken by a violent war. Hence, Sallust says that the republic was governed by fair and equitable law because danger threatened, not because justice so counseled. In that brief space of time, what a nightmare was the year that saw the election of the first consuls, after the overthrow of the kingly power! In fact, the first consuls did not even complete their year of office.

Junius Brutus began by driving his colleague, Lucius Tarquinius Collatinus, out of both his office and the city. Soon after that, Brutus himself fell in battle, slain by the enemy he slew. Before that, he had with his own hands killed his sons and his brothers-in-law, whom he detected in a conspiracy to restore Tarquinius, a deed which Virgil first commended, but very soon mildly deplored. For after saying:

> 'His sons convict of turbulent transgression
> He kills to quit his country from oppression.'[1]

1 *Aeneid* 6.820-823.

he presently lamented, 'Unhappy father, howsoe'er the deed be judged by after days.' By this he means to say that, in whatever light posterity may regard those deeds, though they praise and applaud them, the man who puts his sons to death is a wretched creature. As if to give some solace to that unhappy man, he adds: 'Love of country and an irresistible desire for praise conquer him.'

Take the case of Brutus, the man who slew his own sons, the man who wounded to death Tarquinius' son, his foe, who was in turn slain by the latter, and died long before King Tarquinius. In this man Brutus was there not avenged, apparently, the innocence of his colleague Collatinus, who, good citizen though he was, suffered at Tarquinius' expulsion the same fate as that of the tyrant himself?

The same Brutus was, indeed, also a blood relation of Tarquinius, but the similarity of his surname ruined Collatinus, his full name being Collatinus Tarquinius. Hence, he should have been compelled to change his name, not his country. Finally, by omitting a word from his name, he might have been called simply Lucius Collatinus. Thus he did not lose what he could have lost without damage, but, as first consul and good citizen, he was stripped of his office and rights of citizenship. Is the abominable villainy of Junius Brutus—no asset at all for the republic—to redound to his glory? Does 'Love of country and an irresistible desire for praise conquer him' and compel him to perpetrate even this villainy?

No sooner was the tyrant Tarquinius driven out than Lucretia's husband, Lucius Tarquinius Collatinus, was elected consul together with Brutus. How justly were the people concerned with the good character in the citizen, and not with his name! But, how unjustly did Brutus rob his colleague in

the new dignity, both of his office and of his country, while he could have robbed him of his surname only, if he had cause for offence. These crimes were committed, these calamities occurred, at a time when in the republic 'life was regulated by fair and equitable law.' Lucretius, who succeeded Brutus in office, was carried off by disease before finishing his year. Publius Valerius, who followed Collatinus, and Marcus Horatius, who filled the place of the dead Lucretius, brought to a close that black and mournful year. That year saw no less than five consuls appear and disappear, that very year in which the Roman republic so auspiciously inaugurated the new consular office and dignity.

Chapter 17

When fear had somewhat abated, not because there was respite from wars, but because the people felt their burden less, and when the time had come to an end in which 'life was regulated by fair and equitable law,' there followed the events which are thus briefly chronicled by Sallust:

'Then the patricians began to treat the people like slaves, to dispose of life and limb as arrogantly as the kings had done, to drive them from their fields, and by excluding all others from participation, to monopolize the government. But, oppressed by these outrages, and especially by usury, while they had at the same time to bear the burden of taxes for incessant wars and of military service as well, the people rose up in arms, and entrenched themselves on the Sacred Mount and the Aventine. Thus, they then secured for themselves tribunes of the people and other rights. It was only

the Second Punic War that put an end to the dissensions and struggles between the two classes.'[1]

But, to what purpose do I waste time writing these things and imposing them on my readers? Sallust has given us a summary of the wretched condition of the commonwealth in that long period, and through the many years preceding the Second Punic War, when the republic was harassed by incessant foreign wars and torn asunder by domestic quarrels and civil war. Those boasted victories did not bring the lasting joys of the blessed, but only the hollow comfort of a forlorn and restless people. They were, moreover, deluding inducements to submit to more and more useless misery, and all to no purpose.

I hope that good and sensible Romans will not censure me for saying these things. Such men need no urging or cautioning from me. Indignation on their part is out of the question, for I am saying nothing harsher, or more harshly, than their own writers, whose equal I am neither in style nor in leisure for composition. All Romans have pored over those writers, and they still compel their children to do the same. How can they resent my words, when they could not resent my using the following passage of Sallust?

'There broke out numerous riots and uprisings, culminating in civil wars, while a handful of dictators with a number of followers snatched at power under the honorable name of the Senate or the people. Amid the general corruption, both worthy and unworthy citizens were raised to power, not because of their services to the common weal, but according to each one's wealth and capacity for wrong-doing. A man

1 *Hist.* 1.9.

had only to champion the existing order of things to be held in honor.'[2]

Surely, those writers felt that the historian had a right to speak freely about the dark parts of their city's past. They felt obliged to praise it in many passages, since they had no idea of a nobler city, in which they could be enrolled as citizens of eternity. What should I be expected to do? I have a greater claim to freedom because I have a stronger and surer hope in God, and because it is more called for in view of the charge that our Christ is responsible for the present ills—a charge calculated to alienate weaker and simpler souls from that City in which alone life can be unendingly happy. As for their gods, I say nothing worse against them than well-known authors whom they themselves read and boast about have said. Indeed, it is from those very authors that I took the facts of the story—not all of them and not with their skill in the telling.

Where, then, were those gods whom people falsely think should be worshiped in order to gain the brief and deceptive enjoyment of this world? Where were those gods when the Romans were being crushed by overwhelming disasters, those gods who, with lying cunning, were imposing themselves as objects of worship? Where were they when the consul Valerius was killed while defending the Capitol, fired by slaves and bandits? He could have done more to bring aid to Jupiter's temple than that mob of gods with their highest and best king, whose temple Valerius himself had saved. Where were they when the city, already exhausted by endless revolts, awaiting in a moment of respite the return of the

2 *Ibid.* 1.10.

envoys sent to Athens to borrow its laws,[3] was ravaged by famine and disease?

Where were they when the people, again suffering from famine, appointed the first minister of food? As the famine became worse, Spurius Maelius, who distributed grain among the hungry people, was accused of aspiring to the kingship. At the instance of the same minister, and by the decree of the old and decrepit dictator, Lucius Quintius, he was killed by the hand of the master of the knights, A. Servilius, an act which threw the city into a state of indescribable anarchy and danger.[4] Where were the gods then? Where were they when another deadly plague broke out and, as the helpless gods looked on, the long and much afflicted people conceived the idea of resorting to the celebration of *lectisternia,*[5] something they had never done before? Beds were spread in honor of the gods, and from this the ceremony derived its religious, or rather sacrilegious, name.

Where were they when for ten years[6] the Roman army fought unsuccessfully at Veii, and suffered many a bloody defeat, until Furius Camillus finally came to their aid, and was subsequently rewarded with banishment for his services to the ungrateful city? Where were they when the Gauls captured Rome, sacked it, fired it, deluged it in blood?[7] Where were they when that other dreadful pestilence[8] spread death abroad and carried off, among others, the illustrious Furius

3 The traditional date of the mission is 454 B.C.

4 L. Quinctius Cincinnatus, called from the plough to be dictator in 458 and again in 439. In the latter year, Spurius Maelius was murdered by Caius Servilius Ahala, the *magister equitum.*

5 Feasts for the gods. Their images were set on couches, like diners at an ancient feast, and food was prepared as for a banquet.

6 From 405 to 396 B.C.

7 390 B.C.

8 365 B.C.

Camillus, the hero who first defended a thankless republic against Veii, and then avenged it against the Gauls? During this pestilence, the Romans first introduced stage plays, thus inflicting a new plague, not on their bodies, but, what is far more fatal, on their manners and morals.

Where were they at the time when another frightful plague was started, as it was believed, by the poisons spread by women whose characters, by the testimony of many noble ladies, were more poisonous than any contagion?[9] Where were they when the two consuls, with their armies, were caught by the Samnites in the Caudine Forks[10] and compelled to sign a dishonorable treaty, by the terms of which the Romans delivered 600 knights as hostages and the rest, stripped of their arms and cloaks, had to pass under the enemy's yoke, wearing only a single garment? Where were they when, while another pestilence was taking heavy toll of the rest, a bolt of lightning struck down a great number in the army itself? Or again, during still another malignant epidemic, when Rome was compiled to entreat Aesculapius,[11] as it would the god of medicine, to come from Epidaurus to lend his services? Was it, perhaps, because the habitual debauchery of his youth had disqualified for the study of medicine Jupiter, lord of all the gods, who for so long had sat enthroned in the Capitol?

Where were the gods when the Lucani, the Brutii, the Samnites, the Etruscans, and the Gallic Senones, joined in one vast hostile alliance, first killed the Roman envoys, then crushed the army, and menaced the praetor with seven tribunes and 13,000 troops?[12] Again, where were they when,

9 The story is told by Livy (8.18)
10 In 321 B.C., during the Second Samnite War (326-304).
11 293 B.C. Cf. Chapter 12, above.
12 283 B.C.

at the climax of a long series of bloody insurrections in Rome which drove the people at sword's point to the Janiculum,[13] the mischief wrought by this crisis was so intolerable that, as generally happens in times of great danger, a dictator was appointed in the person of Hortensius? This man brought the people back to the city, and then suddenly died while still in office, a fate which had befallen no other dictator before him? The blame for this falls all the more heavily on the gods because the god-physician Aesculapius was at hand.

After that, so many wars broke out on all sides that, for lack of fighting men, it became necessary to conscript even the proletarians—so called because, rendered incapable of fighting by their wretched poverty, they were fit only to beget children.[14] Then, summoned to their aid by the people of Tarentum, Pyrrhus, King of Greece, declared himself the enemy of the Romans. So, he put the question to Apollo as to what the future had in store for him on the field of battle. Apollo gave this ambiguous reply: 'I declare, O Pyrrhus, that you the Romans can conquer,'[15] a reply so worded that whichever of the two things happened, he would still be regarded as a god. Thus, whether Pyrrhus defeated, or was beaten by, the Romans, Apollo could await either issue as an infallible prophet.

The mutual slaughter of the two armies that followed was frightful beyond all description. In one battle Pyrrhus emerged the victor, wherefore he, understanding the oracle in his favor

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13 The secession of the plebs in 286 led to the *lex hortensia,* by which *plebiscita* were given the same authority as *leges.*

15 *Aio te Aecida Romanos vincere posse.* St. Augustine gives a version from memory, *Dico te, Pyrrhe, vincere posse Romanos.* Pyrrhus landed in Italy in 280, was victor at Heraclea and won a 'Pyrrhic victory' at Ausculum, but was defeated at Beneventum in 275.

might proclaim Apollo a divine prophet, had it not happened that in a second battle the Romans were victorious. To add to the horrors of the war, plague broke out, this time concentrating its violence on women, and carrying them off with child before they could give normal birth. Here, I presume, Aesculapius found excuse for offering no help, on the plea that his function was that of chief physician and not of obstetrician. Even cattle died off in the same way, in such numbers that it was feared the animal species would become extinct.

How can I describe that horrible and unforgettable winter? It raged with such incredible fury that in the Forum itself snow piled up mountains high, and the Tiber was frozen solid for forty endless days. If such a calamity were to happen now, imagine the clamor the enemies of Christianity would raise! What of still another of those devastating epidemics, raging for a long time and destroying countless numbers? As it dragged on its deadly course into a second year, in the helpless presence of Aesculapius, the desparing citizens had recourse to the Sibylline books. In that kind of oracle, Cicero tells us, people place great faith in the interpreters, though these latter merely offer conjectures on doubtful matters as best they can, or as they will.

Their answer, in this case, was that the cause of the plague was the fact that many private persons were occupying a great number of the sacred shrines. Thus was Aesculapius once more acquitted of the grave charge of incompetence or of indolence. But, how was it possible for so many people to invade those sacred places without anyone protesting, save that the prayers to that horde of deities were in the long run found to be a waste of time and effort. The worshipers gradually abandoned the shrines, and, when vacant, they could at

least be used to meet human needs without anyone being shocked.

In the hope of seeing the plague abate, the shrines were zealously reclaimed and reconverted for worship, but they fell back into the old state of neglect, were appropriated by individuals and again fell into oblivion. Had this not happened, Varro's great learning would not have received due credit for having preserved a record of many of those forgotten sanctuaries in the book he wrote on sacred edifices. However, the reclaiming of the temples brought about no cessation of the epidemic, but only ingenious exculpation of the gods.

Chapter 18

During the Punic Wars, victory for a long time hung in the balance between the two great powers battling with all the strength and resources at their command. Meanwhile, what a number of small nations were crushed out of existence! How many prosperous and illustrious cities were razed to the ground; how many communities reduced to misery, even to utter ruin! How many lands and regions were devastated throughout their length and breadth! How often did victory favor first one side, then the other! What a holocaust of lives of combatants and noncombatants! What mighty fleets were destroyed in battles and storms! Any attempt on my part to relate and recall these events would merely turn me into a chronicler.

Stricken by panic, the city of Rome had hasty recourse to vain and ridiculous remedies. By command of the Sibylline Books, the secular games[1] were again celebrated. They were meant to be celebrated century by century, but had already

1 The *ludi saeculares* were reintroduced in 249 B.C.

fallen into oblivion in happier days. The pontiffs resumed the celebration of the sacred games in honor of the nether gods, which had also been abolished in the good old days. Of course, when the games came back, the deities of the lower world, swelled by the host of the dead, wanted to have a good time—as though miserable men, with their ferocious wars, murderous hatreds, and alternating and deadly victories, had not already provided games and sumptuous banquets enough for the devils in hell.

Surely, in the first Punic War, nothing was more tragic than the defeat of the Romans in which the heroic Regulus himself was taken prisoner—as I have mentioned already in Books I and II. He was most certainly a great man and on a previous occasion had beaten the Carthaginians and tamed their spirit. He would have even brought the First Punic War to an end, had not a craving for fame and glory led him to impose on the weary Carthaginians harsher conditions than they could bear. If that man's unforeseen capture, humiliating imprisonment, fidelity to his oath, and barbarous death do not strike shame into those gods, then indeed they are brazen—and bloodless.

Within the walls of the city itself there was no lack of misfortunes during this period. The waters of the Tiber rose abnormally above the banks and flooded almost the entire lower section of Rome.[2] Some buildings collapsed at the first violence of the flood and others by the constant seeping of the stagnant water. On top of this disaster followed an even more destructive fire, which razed the taller buildings around the Forum, and did not even spare the Temple of Vesta—fire's faithful shrine. For here, the Vestal Virgins,

2 In 247 B.C.

condemned to, rather than honored by, such service, dutifully fed a fire with wood and kept it perpetually alive. But, on that occasion, the fire not merely lived, it raged with savage fury. Terrified by its onrush, the Virgins could not rescue from the flames the fateful penates, which had already brought ruin to the three cities where they had been, but the pontifex Metellus, without a thought for his own safety, rushed in and rescued them, though he was badly burned. Either the fire had no respect for its own pontiff, or else the god of fire was there, but would not have fled, even though he could.

Hence, the man was a greater protection to the gods of Vesta than the gods were to the man. For, if the gods were unable by their own power to turn back the fire, how could they save from flood and conflagration the city whose security rested, as people imagined, in their hands? The event made it more than ever clear that such a thing was beyond their power.

I would not bring all this up if the pagans would only admit that those sacred emblems were instituted not to protect earthly, but to symbolize eternal, goods. In that case, if those things were to perish as do all material and visible things, that would be no loss to the higher benefits their institution was meant to secure. They could always be replaced and serve the same purposes. But, by a strange blindness, the Romans imagine that the material security and the temporal well-being of the city could be guaranteed against loss by means of sacred objects that are liable to destruction. Yet, though it is made obvious to them that, even if those sacred objects remain safe, they bring only misfortune and the breakdown of security, they still are ashamed to give up a belief they cannot defend.

Chapter 19

It would take too long for me to recount the deadly and widely extended clashes between the two warring nations. They struggled till the victor almost succumbed with the victim. This is admitted even by those historians whose purpose is to glorify the Roman Empire rather than to tell the truth about the Roman wars. Follow Hannibal's march: he sets out from Spain, crosses the Pyrenees, overruns Gaul, and cuts his way through the Alps. Having gathered strength by plunder and conquest in the course of the long drive, his forces poured like a torrent down through the Italian passes. Many a bloody battle was fought; many a time did the Romans go down in defeat! Many a town surrendered to the enemy; many more suffered capture and ruin! How many ferocious battles there were in which the slaughter of the Romans covered Hannibal with glory!

What can one say of the indescribably frightful catastrophe at Cannae?[1] There, ruthless as he was, Hannibal, we are told was so glutted with the slaughter of his bitterest enemies that he ordered his men to cease killing. From that battle Hannibal sent to Carthage three bushels of gold rings, announcing thereby that the number of slain Roman nobles was so great that they could be more easily measured than counted. Likewise, the still greater number of common and ringless soldiers who perished could be more easily conjectured than given in figures.

At length, fighting men became so scarce that the Romans were compelled to enlist released criminals and liberated slaves, and with them organize what was more like a new

1 216 B.C.

army of riff-raff than reinforcements of the line. But the slaves—or, as they now had the right to be called, the freedmen who were to fight for the Roman republic—had no weapons. These the Romans took from the temples, as if saying to their gods: 'Surrender the arms which you have kept idle so long, against this very possibility that our slaves might be able to use those weapons to advantage, which you, our protecting gods, have had no power to use.'

Then, as the treasury had no money to pay the soldiery, private resources came to the aid of the state. Each one gave what he had, so completely that the Senators themselves were entirely stripped of every ounce of gold, except for a ring and an amulet, which each one kept as a sad token of rank. The remaining estates and tribes were even more impoverished. Who could endure those pagans if they were reduced to such destitution in our own days, seeing that we can hardly stand them now, when out of sheer love of extravagant pleasure they can lavish more on comedians than could be scraped together for the legions in the old days and in a moment of extreme national danger?

Chapter 20

Of the tragic events that marked the course of the Second Punic War, none was more pathetic and more deplorable than the fate of Saguntum. This city of Spain, of all cities friendliest to the Roman people, was totally destroyed for standing firm in its loyalty. Hannibal, having broken his treaty with the Romans, took every occasion to provoke them into a new war. Hence, he savagely laid siege to Saguntum.[1] When the news of this reached Rome, envoys were sent to

1 219 B.C.

Hannibal demanding that he raise the siege. Rebuffed by Hannibal, they proceeded to Carthage to protest the violation of the treaty, but returned to Rome with nothing accomplished.

In the meantime, that unfortunate city, one of the most flourishing and most highly esteemed both by its own country and by Rome, was razed to the ground by the Carthaginians in the eighth or ninth month of the siege. One shudders with horror as he reads the story of its destruction, and much more so as he writes about it. But, I shall briefly tell the story, for it is very relevant to the subject under consideration. To begin with, famine raged so devastatingly in the city that, according to some reports, people fed on the corpses of their own dead. Then, having reached the point of exhaustion, the people of Saguntum, determined not to fall captive to Hannibal, erected an immense pyre, and into its flames they all plunged, stabbing one another to death as they did so.

This is where the gods should have gone into action, those gluttons and swaggering humbugs who open their mouths for the fat of the sacrifices and throw into people's eyes the dust of the ambiguous oracles. This is where they might have done something to bring aid to a city friendly to the Roman people. They should not have suffered her to perish for keeping her pledged faith. For, they were the very ones who presided as mediators when Saguntum bound herself to the Roman state by treaty. For standing firm by the pact she had entered into with deliberation in the presence of the gods, accepted with loyalty, and sealed with an oath, that noble city was beleaguered, conquered, and destroyed by a treacherous foe. If those same gods later on frightened Hannibal far away from the very walls of Rome, by thunder and lightning, they

should have done something similar on the previous occasion before the walls of Saguntum.

I even venture to say that those gods could have shown their rage with more honor to themselves, in behalf of Rome's friends than in behalf of the Romans. These friends of Rome faced a deadly peril without assistance, in order to keep their faith with the Romans, while the Romans, fighting for themselves, were able to face Hannibal with ampler resources. If, therefore, the gods were really the guardians of Rome's prosperity and glory, they should have kept its name clear of the stigma which the tragedy of Saguntum cast upon it. It is foolish to believe that it was due to their protection that Rome survived despite Hannibal's victory, when we know that they were unable to bring aid to the city of Saguntum because of her friendship for Rome, and save her from ruin.

Suppose that the Saguntines were a Christian people, and had to suffer a calamity of this kind for their faith in the Gospel. They would not, of course, have taken their lives by fire and sword. But, assuming that they had to suffer disaster for their faith, their sufferings would have been brightened by their trust in Christ, which held out to them not a fleeting, but an eternal, reward. As for those gods who are supposed to be worshiped, and whose worship is demanded, in order to assure the enjoyment of transitory goods for a brief moment here below, what more can their advocates and apologists say in their favor, in view of the victims of Saguntum, than they could say about the death of Regulus?[2]

However, there is this difference. In his case, the victim

2 Marcus Atilius Regulus, consul (for the second time) in 256, defeated the Carthaginian navy at Ecnomus, but, after landing, was defeated by Xanthippus in 255 and imprisoned for five years. The story of his mission to Rome and return to torture and death in Carthage must be placed after the defeat of Hasdrubal in 251.

was only one man; in this, the entire population of a city. But, in either case, the calamity was the price of keeping pledged faith. To keep this, Regulus preferred to return to the enemy, and Saguntum refused to surrender to Hannibal. Does the observance of loyalty arouse the wrath of the gods? Can not only individual men, but even whole cities, meet doom in spite of their protection? Let them take their choice. If those gods frown on loyalty to one's oath, let them look for traitors to worship them. If, even under their patronage, men and cities are allowed to perish amid sufferings beyond count and measure, then their worship brings no reward of happiness here below. Let those, therefore, who imagine that the loss of the sacred trinkets of their gods means misfortune lay aside their ill will toward us. For, not only if the gods remain, but even if they are propitious, our accusers could not only grumble about their misery, as they are now doing, but might also be subjected to barbarous torments, and then be utterly destroyed, as were Regulus and the Saguntines.

Chapter 21

We come now to the period between the Second and the Third and last Punic Wars.[1] In order to keep within the scope of my work, I must pass over many details. It is the period in which Sallust describes the Romans as living on a high moral level and in perfect harmony. It was in this period of high morality and perfect concord that the illustrious Scipio, by his incredibly brilliant generalship, saved Rome and

1 The Second Punic War, begun in 218, ended in 201; the Third began in 149 and ended three years later with the destruction of Carthage.

Italy, brought to an end that monstrously brutal, ominous, and perilous Second Punic War, defeated Hannibal, and conquered Carthage. From his youth, his life is described as devoted to the gods and nurtured in the atmosphere of the temple. Yet, this hero was made the target of envious enemies' accusations, and was driven from the city which he had saved and liberated by his valor. Like a man without a country, he retired to Linterno, on the Campanian coast, where he spent the rest of his days. After his brilliant triumph, he never had any desire to return to Rome. In fact, we are told, he gave orders forbidding that, even after his death, his bones be brought to his ungrateful country for funeral rites.

Shortly after the victory of the proconsul Gnaeus Manlius over the Gallo-Grecians,[2] we see for the first time Asiatic luxury invading Rome, more sinister than an enemy. Then, for the first time, we read of gilded beds and precious carpets being seen in Rome. Then, too, were women citharaplayers and other accompaniments of debauchery first introduced at banquets. But, my purpose is to speak of evils which men suffer unwillingly, not of those which they deliberately bring upon themselves. Hence, what I said of Scipio's fate, namely, of his dying outside the country he saved, a victim of his enemies, is more relevant to the present discussion. The Roman gods who are venerated for the sake of earthly happiness made him no return for driving Hannibal from their temples.

But, since Sallust speaks of the high morality of that period, I thought fit to mention the licentiousness that then

2 Gnaeus Manlius Vulso commanded an expedition against the Galatians in 189 B.C.

invaded Rome from Asia, in order to make it perfectly clear that Sallust's eulogy is to be understood only relatively. What he says is true only by way of comparison with other times, when morals had sunk even lower because of violent dissensions. For it was then, in the interval between the Second and the last Punic Wars, that the notorious Voconian Law[3] was passed, which excluded a woman from the benefits of inheritance even though she was the only daughter. I do not know what can be imagined more iniquitious than this law. Nevertheless, the misery of the whole period which separated the two Punic Wars was not wholly unendurable. Abroad, the armed forces were worn out by wars, but were compensated by victories. At home, no dissensions raged, as in other years. But, in the last Punic War, by one vigorous thrust, the second Scipio, who was on that account surnamed 'the African,' destroyed the rival of the Roman Empire down to its very roots. From then on, because of the flood of immorality caused by a period of prosperity and security, the Roman republic itself was overwhelmed by a mounting tide of disasters. Thus, the sudden fall of Carthage did more harm to Rome than its prolonged hostility.

Such were the conditions under which Romans lived during the long period preceding the time of Augustus Caesar.[4] Augustus did not, as pagans believe, wrest from the Romans their glorious liberty, but only a contentious, pernicious, thoroughly anemic, and languishing liberty. Making his royal will the law in everything, he put new life and vigor into a state that was tottering, as it were, with decrepit old age.

3 Passed by the efforts of the tribune of the people, Q. Voconius Saxa, in 169.

4 Caius Julius Caesar Octavianus Augustus, born in 63 B.C., defeated (with Antony's help) the murderers of Julius Caesar at Philippi in 42. After the battle of Actium in 31, he became the master of the Roman Empire. He died in A.D. 14.

For many other reasons, I say nothing about the endless calamities that wars brought on during those years, nor about that indelible stain on Roman honor, the ignominious treaty with Numantia.[5] The sacred chickens had flown out from their coop, and this, people said, was an omen of disaster for the consul Mancinus—just as though it was under other omens that other Roman generals moved against Numantia during all those years in which that little city had harassed the besieging Roman army, and had begun to strike with terror the mighty republic of Rome itself.

Chapter 22

I need say no more about this, but there is one disaster about which I cannot possibly keep silent. That is the order which Mithridates, King of Asia, issued, that Roman citizens traveling in Asia, of whom there were large numbers engaged in business, should all be massacred on one and the same day.[1] The order was executed. What a ghastly spectacle to see men suddenly, without warning, barbarously struck down wherever they were, in the field or on the road, in town or at home, in the street, the forum or the temple, in bed or at table. No one can describe the groans of the dying, the tears of the onlookers—even those of the very executioners. Think of the cruelty of forcing hosts not only to witness those butcheries in their homes, but to perpetrate them; and to change suddenly from friendly courtesy to bloody murder in an atmosphere of peace. Here, the wounds were inflicted on both sides: the victim was stabbed in the body; the assailant, in

5 The treaty concluded in 137 B.C. by C Hostilius Mancinus and repudiated by the Roman Senate.

1 88 B.C.

the soul. Had all those unfortunates, by any chance, despised the omens? When they left their homes to go on the journey from which they were not to return, did they have neither domestic nor public gods to consult?

If this be true, then our pagan accusers have no reason, on this head, to complain about Christianity. The Romans have long regarded these absurdities with scorn. If they did consult the auguries, then what good did it do them at a time when those things were authorized, though only by human laws, and no one forbade them?

Chapter 23

I must turn now to recount, as briefly as possible, those misfortunes which were so distressing because they struck so close at home—our uncivilized civil discords, seditions that were, rather, open wars between cities, in which blood was shed in torrents, in which fraternal enmity was not expressed in electoral struggles and mutual recriminations, but in the rattle and rage of weapons. Social wars, slave wars, civil wars—they all spilled Roman blood, they made a waste and desert of Italy!

Before the Latins arose against Rome in the social war,[1] all the domestic animals, like dogs, horses, donkeys, oxen, and other cattle subject to man, suddenly went mad. Forgetting their domestic gentleness, they broke out from their barns and stalls, wandered at large, and kept at a distance not only strangers, but even their own masters who attempted to approach them. Anyone who dared to come near them did

1 Tiberius Sempronius Gracchus proposed a law to limit land holdings in 133. He was opposed by the nobles led by P. Cornelius Scipio Nasica and was murdered. His brother Gaius became tribune in 123, and continued the reform legislation. He was killed in 121.

so at the risk of life and limb. If this phenomenon was an omen of evil, how dreadful must the evil have been! If it was not, it was in itself evil enough. If such a prodigy had occurred in our times, we would have to endure in our pagan accusers a more ferocious horde of beasts than the older Romans did in their maddened animals.

Chapter 24

The first of the civil upheavals was the revolt of the Gracchi, provoked by the agrarian laws.[1] The Gracchi's proposal was that the lands unjustly held by the aristocracy should be divided among the people. But, the bold attempt to abolish the deep-rooted abuse turned out to be even more ruinous than risky. What slaughter followed the assassination of the first Gracchus and that of his brother not long after! It was not only a matter of public executions, but it was by mob violence and by bloody rioting that patricians and plebeians slew one another.

After the assassination of the younger Gracchus, the consul Lucius Opimius, who had raised an army against him within the city, and had overthrown and slain both Gracchus and his confederates, then massacred a vast number of citizens. He instituted a trial, and by way of judicial inquest found the rest guilty, and, we are informed, put three thousand men to death. One can imagine how great was the toll of victims claimed by the armed violence of the mobs, when a deliberate judicial trial could take so many lives. Gracchus' assassin sold his victim's head to the consul for its weight in gold, a bargain concluded before the massacre. In this, the ex-consul, Marcus Fulvius, also lost his life, together with his children.

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1 91-88 B.C.

Chapter 25

It was surely with a feeling for paradox that the Senate ordered a temple in honor of Concord to be erected on the very spot where the bloody riot broke out and cost the lives of so many citizens, high and low. It was meant as a witness of the penalty paid by the Gracchi, a warning to strike the eyes and stir the memories of demagogues. Actually, the raising of a temple to that goddess merely made the gods a laughing-stock—for, surely, if Concord had been in the city, it would not have been torn by so many disorders. Unless, of course, we prefer to say that the goddess Concord, guilty of deserting the lives of her fellow citizens, deserved to be shut up in that temple, as in a prison.

If they had wanted to be in accord with history, they should rather have built a temple in honor of Discord. There is no real reason why Concord should be a goddess and Discord not, or why, according to Labeo's distinction, the one should not be good and the other bad. In fact, the only reason that led Labeo to make the distinction was that in Rome he saw a temple dedicated to Fever as well as to Health. According to that reasoning, a temple should have been built not only to Concord, but also to Discord.

In fact, the Romans took a risk in choosing to live under the frown of so evil a goddess. They forgot that the cause of Troy's destruction was ultimately to be traced to Discord's displeasure. It was because she was not invited with the other gods that she caused a quarrel among the three goddesses by throwing the golden apple among them. This was the beginning of the rift among the gods, the triumph of Venus, the rape of Helen, and the destruction of Troy. It may be, then, that she resented the slight of not being thought worthy of a temple along with the other gods, and on that account

kept the city in such turmoil. Imagine her anger when she saw a temple dedicated to her rival on the spot of the notorious massacre, that is, on the very scene of her own exploit!

When I ridicule these absurdities, the pagan scholars and sages rage with indignation. Yet, the devotees of the good and the bad gods cannot escape the Concord and Discord dilemma. Either they discarded these divinities in favor of Fever and Bellona, in whose honor they built temples in the old days, or they worshiped them also. In this case, Concord deserted them, and raging Discord flung them headlong into civil war.

Chapter 26

As an impressive curb to rebellion, they chose to set the Temple of Concord before the eyes of agitators as a reminder of the death penalty inflicted on the Gracchi. If any proof of the futility of this device were needed, it may be found in the greater evils that followed. From that time on, the demagogues strove, not to avoid the example set by the Gracchi, but to outdo their designs. Thus acted Lucius Saturninus, the tribune of the people,[1] and Gaius Servilius, the praetor, and, some years afterwards, Marcus Drusus. The revolts which these men engineered were the signal for the horrible massacres that immediately followed, and for the social wars that broke out later. Convulsed by these conflicts, Italy was reduced to indescribable ruin and its population decimated.

On the heels of the social wars followed the servile and the civil wars.[2] The battles fought and the blood shed are

1 First, in 102 B C.; and a second time in 100. Gaius Servilius Glaucia was praetor in 100. Marcus Drusus was tribune of the people in 91.
2 Social War, 91-88; Civil War, 88-82; Third Servile War, 73-71.

beyond description. Almost all the nations of Italy, the backbone of the Roman Empire, were beaten down as though they were barbarians. Even the historians have scarcely found words to describe what happened when a handful of gladiators, less than seventy in number, started the servile war: the mass of slaves, mad with rage, that swelled their numbers, the many Roman generals they slew, the cities and regions they devastated as they swept on. That was not the only war of slaves. Hordes of slaves also ravaged the province of Macedonia, and, later, Sicily and the maritime coast. It is impossible to find words fit to describe the numberless and frightful robberies they committed, and the formidable piratical raids on the shipping lanes.

Chapter 27

With his hands still dripping with the blood of hundreds of his political rivals whom he had massacred, Marius fled from Rome in defeat. The city had scarcely time to regain its breath, when, in Cicero's words, 'in the sequel Cinna and Marius got the upper hand. The lights of the city were quenched when its most illustrious men were slain. Later, Sulla took revenge for this bloody victory, and it is needless to recall how frightful was the slaughter of the citizens and the disaster to the state.'[1] Of this act of revenge, which did more harm than if the crimes avenged had been left unpunished, Lucan has this to add: 'The remedy exceeded due measure, and the hand followed the trail of the disease too far. The guilty ones perished, but at a time when none but the guilty could survive.'[2]

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1 *In Catilinam* 3.10.

2 *Pharsalia* 2.142-144.

In the war between Marius and Sulla, besides the numbers slain in the battles outside Rome, in the city itself, the streets, the squares, the forums, the theatres, and the temples overflowed with corpses. It is hard to say whether the victors butchered more people while fighting for victory, or after they had won it. Close upon the success of Marius when he fought his way back from exile, not to mention the massacres perpetrated everywhere, the head of the consul Octavius was exposed on the rostra;[3] the two Caesar brothers were killed in their own homes by Fimbria; the two Crassi, father and son, were slain before each other's eyes; Baebius and Numitorius were dragged along with hooks and died when their bodies broke open; Catulus escaped from his enemies' hands by taking poison; Merula, the flamen of Jupiter, opened his veins, and with his blood made a libation to Jupiter. Before the eyes of Marius himself, every one was struck down whose salute he refused to acknowledge by raising his right hand.

Chapter 28

Then followed Sulla's victory. It was meant to avenge those atrocities, but was won only at the cost of numberless citizens' lives. When the war was over, the bitter animosities kept alive in time of peace made the victory even more atrocious. For, after the old and new massacres ordered by the elder Marius, came a wave of bloodier ones instigated by his partisans, Carbo and the younger Marius. When they saw Sulla overshadowing them, threatening not only their hope for victory but even their lives, in desperation they spread havoc all around by further butcheries of their own. Not content

3 87 B.C.

with the widespread slaughter, they surrounded the Senate house and dragged the Senators from the Curia, as from a prison, to execution. The pontifex himself, Mucius Scaevola, was cut down as he threw his arms around the altar in the Temple of Vesta, a spot which the Romans held more sacred than any other, and with his blood almost extinguished the fire kept always burning by the constant vigilance of the Vestals.

Then, the victorious Sulla marched into the city. It was amid the furies not of war but of peace that he ordered 7,000 men slaughtered in a state villa, after they had capitulated and laid down their arms. Throughout the city, followers of Sulla put to the sword any they pleased. It was impossible to count the many corpses until Sulla was advised to leave alive some of the conquered, in order that the victors might have subjects to rule over. Finally a halt was called to the orgy of authorized and indiscriminate murder. In its stead, a list, greeted with loud applause, was posted, giving the names of 2,000 men of two upper classes, equestrian and senatorial, and marking them for death or proscription. The number caused consternation, but the limit put to it was reassuring; there was less grief that so many were doomed than there was joy that the rest need no longer fear. Among those who were doomed to die, the fiendish manner of their execution wrung pity even from those who enjoyed their grim security. One victim was torn to pieces, not with weapons but with bare hands, thus affording the spectacle of human beings dismembering a live man with more ferocity than wild beasts do a corpse thrown to them. Another wretch had his eyes scooped out, and then, while his limbs were being hacked off piecemeal, his life, or rather his death, was forcibly prolonged in an agony of torture. Some splendid

cities were sold at auction like small farms, but one of them was ordered to be led to execution, like a single culprit, and saw its entire population massacred.

The atrocities were committed in a period of peace following a war, not to hasten the winning of a victory, but that the victory once won might not be underestimated. Peace vied with war in a contest of ferocity, and peace won. War struck down men in arms; peace, men without weapons. According to the rules of war, the man who was struck, struck back if he could; by the rules of that peace, the man who escaped was not to live, but to die without a struggle.

Chapter 29

No fury of foreign nations and no ruthlessness of barbarians can be compared with this victory of citizens over fellow citizens. Rome never witnessed a crime so fateful, black, and revolting. It can be compared neither with the incursion of the Gauls long ago, nor with that of the Goths more recently, nor with the ferocity which Marius and Sulla and other men of light and leading in their parties in Rome vented on members of their own body. The Gauls, it is true, massacred the Senators wherever they could find trace of them throughout the city, except those who found refuge in the stronghold of the Capitol, which somehow got defended. But, the Gauls at least sold for gold the lives of those who were on that rock. They could not take them with the sword, but they could have snuffed them out by means of a siege. On the other hand, the Goths spared so many Senators that it is a wonder they killed any at all.

Sulla, while Marius was still alive, took up his quarters on the Capitol which the Gauls had failed to take, and thence gave the signal for the butchery we know. When Marius fled,

only to return more savage and more bloodthirsty than before, he proceeded by senatorial decree to rob many of their lives and property. But, once Sulla was gone, nothing was left too sacred for Marius' partisans to profane. They did not even spare the life of Mucius, a fellow citizen, a Senator, a pontifex whom they cut down with his arms pitifully clinging to the shrine which was believed to hold the destinies of Rome. Finally, not to mention other assassinations too numerous to reckon, there is the last black list of Sulla, which decreed the doom of more senators than the Goths were able even to plunder.

Chapter 30

What, therefore, could show more effrontery, audacity, impudence, folly, and even madness, than for the pagans to refuse to blame those past calamities on their gods while they charge the present disasters to our Christ? The barbarous civil wars which, on the admission of their own historians, were more vindictive than all foreign wars on record, and which not only plagued the republic but utterly ruined it, all occurred many years before the coming of Christ. By a natural sequence of ill-fated cause and effect, the war between Marius and Sulla led to the wars of Sertorius and Catiline,[1] the former of whom was proscribed by Sulla and the latter encouraged. From these, spring the wars of Lepidus and Catulus,[2] of whom Lepidus sought to undo Sulla's work and Catulus to uphold it. Then followed the conflict between Pompey and Caesar. Pompey had been Sulla's follower, but had matched and even outstripped him. Caesar, however, could not allow

1 In 78 B.C. and 63.

2 77 B.C.

Pompey a power he himself did not have, and gained the upper hand over his rival when he defeated and slew him. So we come to the other Caesar, later called Augustus, during whose reign Christ was born.

Augustus himself waged civil wars with more than one opponent, wars in which perished many an illustrious man, not least among them being Cicero, the celebrated orator, who gave us the masterly treatise on the art of governing the State. This same Gaius Caesar was murdered in the very precincts of the Curia by a clique of senators turned conspirators, who alleged that their victim had schemed to seize power and that they were acting in defense of the republic's liberty. Yet, their victim was the very man who had put down Pompey, and who had used his victory with clemency by sparing the lives of his adversaries and restoring to them their dignities.

As heir of Caesar's power there rose up a man of far different character, a man befouled and degraded by every vice, that Antony whom Cicero withstood with all his might in the name of that same liberty. Then came forward a young man of high character, that other Caesar, Gaius Caesar's adopted son, who, as I said, was later given the title of Augustus. To this young Caesar, Cicero lent all his support, in an effort to strengthen his power against Antony. He hoped that, once Antony was checked and crushed, Caesar would bring back freedom to the State. But, the orator was an extraordinarily blind prophet. He did not foresee that the very young man he was aiding to office and power was to deliver Cicero's own life into Antony's hands as a sort of peace-offering, and was to subject to his own dictatorship the country's liberty, to the restoration of which Cicero had devoted so much of his oratory.

Chapter 31

Let the pagans blame their own gods for all their woes, instead of repaying our Christ with ingratitude for all His good gifts. Certain it is that, when calamities rained upon them, 'the altars streamed with Sabaean incense and were fresh with fragrance of chaplets.'[1] While Romans were shedding Roman blood, not only in ordinary places, but before the very altars of the gods, the pagan priesthood was held in honor, the shrines were bright, all was sacrifices, plays and orgies in the temples. Note that Cicero sought no temple for sanctuary, because that had been of no avail for Mucius. But, the pagans of our day, while they have far less reason to decry the era, have either fled for sanctuary to the most hallowed Christian places, or have been taken there by the barbarians to save their lives.

I need not repeat what I have already said or mention anything I had to omit, but one thing is certain, and anyone whose mind is free from bias will readily admit it: If mankind had embraced Christ's teaching before the Punic Wars, and if there had followed the terrible devastation of those wars in Europe and Africa, there is not one of those intolerable critics who would not have blamed those evils on the Christian religion.

Their outcries would have been even more intolerable, especially in what touches the Romans, if the invasion of the Gauls, or the inundation of the Tiber and the devastating fires, or, what was worse, the horrors of those civil wars of evil memory had occurred after the acceptance and spread of Christianity. Other calamities befell, so appalling as to seem the work of demons. Suppose that these, too, had

1 *Aeneid* 1.416, 417

occurred in Christian times. Against what other people but Christians would they have been charged as crimes?

I shall say nothing of the merely freakish phenomena, which caused little harm: talking cattle, unborn infants uttering words in the mother's womb, flying serpents, women and hens turned male, and the like. These things are recorded in their books, not of fables but of history, and, whether they are true or false, strike men with wonderment but do no harm. However, when earth, clay, and stones (real stones, not hail, commonly called 'stones') rained from the sky, these, indeed, could also do serious harm.

In those books we read that, when the lava poured down from the crater of Mt. Aetna to the shore, the sea became such a caldron that it calcined the rocks and melted the pitch from the ships. Incredible as a marvel, this was also harmful as an occurrence. On another occasion, the writers tell us, a similar eruption poured such a deluge of ashes upon Sicily that the houses of Catania were overwhelmed by it and collapsed under the weight. Moved with pity by that disaster, the Romans remitted the tribute for that year. It is also written that Africa was already a Roman province when a swarm of locusts of monstrous proportions swooped down on the land, devoured the fruit and leaves on the trees, and then plunged into the sea in an enormous cloud. When the dead insects were washed ashore, infecting the air by their corruption, a pestilence set in, so violent that in the kingdom of Masinissa alone 800,000 men are reported to have perished, and many more in the regions that lay close to the coast.

We are further assured that in Utica, out of 30,000 people, only 10,000 were left alive. Now, if the half-wits we have to endure and must answer were to witness all these catastrophes occurring in Christian times, there is not one of them who

would not saddle them on Christianity. But, they will blame their gods for none of those misfortunes. Indeed, they demand the restoration of their worship, so that they may be preserved from these and lesser evils, despite the fact that when their forebears worshiped the gods, they suffered greater calamities by far.

BOOK IV

Chapter 1

IN THE FIRST PAGES of this work on the City of God, I saw fit to give an answer to its enemies. Running mad after the pleasures of earth and eagerly grasping at fleeting goods, they denounce the Christian religion, the only salutary and true one, for any hardship they suffer rather through God's merciful admonition than through the severity of His punishment.

Among our accusers there is an ignorant rabble, incited by the authority of the learned to cast greater odium upon us. These simple souls imagine that the abnormal calamities that have occurred in our own day were entirely unknown in the past. This foolish opinion is encouraged even by those who know it to be false, but who pretend ignorance in order to give an air of truth to their grumblings. Hence, I have gone to the books in which their own historians have recorded, for men's information, the things that happened in the past, and from these I have proved two important facts: first, that the actual events were far different from what these people imagined; second, that the false gods which pagans then worshiped in the open, and now worship under cover, were unclean spirits, malignant and lying demons. The truth of this is clear from the fact that these demons go so far as to take delight in their own villainies, to the extent of wanting them exhibited, either as facts or as fictions, in the festivals celebrated in their honor. I have also pointed out that, as

long as these villainies are exhibited for imitation under divine sanction, so to speak, it is impossible to restrain weak humans from actually reproducing in their own lives the abominable acts committed by the gods.

My proofs were not guesses. I have drawn them partly from my own recent recollection, for I have seen with my own eyes those indecent dramas, performed in homage to such divinities. I have drawn them also from the writings of those who left accounts of these mythological exploits, not with the intention of casting disgrace upon the gods, but of doing them honor. Thus, Varro, one of their most learned and authoritative scholars, wrote various books on human and divine institutions. But, when he arranged his topics in the order of their importance, grouping human affairs in one book, and divine in another, he by no means classed stage plays under human, but under divine institutions. He was certain that, if none but good and decent men lived in Rome, stage plays would have found no place among human institutions. Nor did Varro so classify things on his own authority. Since he was born and educated in Rome, he simply found stage plays a part of the pagan religious rites.

At the end of Book I, I briefly sketched what I had in mind to say in the sequel. Part of that I have told in the two books that followed, but I realize what I still owe to my expectant readers.

Chapter 2

I promised to advance some facts that would show the error of those who blame our religion for the woes of the Roman state, and to recall, as they occurred to me according to their gravity and in sufficient number, the calamities which Rome and the provinces of the Empire had to endure in times

before their sacrifices were forbidden. All these calamities they would certainly have blamed on us, if our faith had by then shed its light on them or banned their sacrifices. These matters I have sufficiently described, I think, in Books II and III. In the second, I dealt with the moral evils which must be regarded as the only real and serious calamities. In Book III, I treated of those calamities which alone foolish people dread to face, those evils which affect the body and material goods, and which ordinarily even the good have to suffer. As for their own moral evils, our pagan accusers accept them not only patiently, but gladly. I have spoken only of the city of Rome and its imperial possessions, and have not even extended my discussion to Caesar Augustus, and I covered very few evils.

What if I had chosen to review and to emphasize, not the kind of evils which men inflict on one another, such as the ravages and devastations brought on by wars, but those which the elements of nature let loose upon the earth? To these Apuleius briefly refers in a passage of his treatise, *De mundo,* where he says that all earthly things are subject to change, to transformation, and to annihilation.[1] To use his own words, he relates that tremendous earthquakes made yawning chasms in the ground, swallowing cities with their inhabitants. Cloudbursts deluged entire regions; what had been continents were turned into islands by the onrush of near and distant waters. Other places became accessible as the surrounding waters withdrew, and men could reach them on foot. Cities were

1 Lucius Apuleius Afer, author of *The Golden Ass, On the World, On the Philosophy* of Plato, a platonist philosopher and rhetorician who flourished in the second century and who is often alluded to by St. Augustine. He does not cite here the exact words of Apuleius, in spite of the *ut verbis eius utar.*

beaten to the ground by windstorms and hurricanes. Conflagrations kindled by lightning swallowed up in flames whole regions in the East, while on the coasts of the West waterspouts and floods caused similar devastation. So, also, on one occasion the craters overflowed from the summit of Mt. Aetna and down the slopes rushed torrents of flaming lava ignited by divine power.

If I had wished to gather these and similar occurrences from history and other sources, I could never finish the tragic story of all that came to pass before the Name of Christ had put bounds to all the follies so dangerous to true salvation.

I also promised to point out the Roman virtues, and the reasons why the true God—to whose power all kingdoms are subject—deigned to bless the Empire with increase. I also proposed to show how those beings the pagans imagine to be gods contributed nothing, and how, on the contrary, they worked immense harm by their frauds and deceptions. That, I take it, is the topic I must now discuss, and, in particular, the growth of the Roman Empire. On the wicked deceits of the demons whom the Romans worshiped as gods, and on the incalculable harm those demons did to Roman morals, I have already commented at some length, principally in Book II.

On the other hand, in the three completed Books, wherever it seemed opportune, I pointed out how much comfort, even amid the hardships of war, God brought both to the good and to the wicked. This He did through the Name of Christ, whom the barbarians reverenced counter to the ways of war. Thus, 'He maketh His sun to rise upon the good and bad and raineth upon the just and unjust.'[2]

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2 Matt. 5.45.

Chapter 3

Let us now consider on what grounds our adversaries affirm that the immensity and long duration of the Roman Empire are gifts of those gods whom, they insist, they have honorably worshiped by the homage of infamous plays performed by the ministrations of infamous men. I would first like to find an answer to this question: Is it reasonable and wise to glory in the extent and greatness of the Empire when you can in no way prove that there is any real happiness in men perpetually living amid the horrors of war, perpetually wading in blood? Does it matter whether it is the blood of their fellow citizens or the blood of their enemies? It is still human blood, in men perpetually haunted by the gloomy spectre of fear and driven by murderous passions. The happiness arising from such conditions is a thing of glass, of mere glittering brittleness. One can never shake off the horrible dread that it may suddenly shiver into fragments.

In order to be perfectly clear on this point, we must not be carried away by hollow verbal blasts and allow our judgment to be confused by the high-sounding words of prattlers about nations, kingdoms, and provinces. Let us imagine two individuals—for each man, like a letter in a word, is an integral part of a city or of a kingdom, however extensive. Of these two men, let us suppose that one is poor, or, better, in moderate circumstances; the other, extremely wealthy. But, our wealthy man is haunted by fear, heavy with cares, feverish with greed, never secure, always restless, breathless from endless quarrels with his enemies. By these miseries, he adds to his possessions beyond measure, but he also piles up for himself a mountain of distressing worries. The man of modest means is content with a small and compact patrimony. He is loved by his own, enjoys the sweetness of peace

in his relations with kindred, neighbors, and friends, is religious and pious, of kindly disposition, healthy in body, self-restrained, chaste in morals, and at peace with his conscience.

I wonder if there is anyone so senseless as to hesitate over which of the two to prefer. What is true of these two individuals is likewise true of two families, two nations, two kingdoms; the analogy holds in both cases. If we apply it with care and correct our judgment accordingly, it will be easy to see on which side lies folly and on which true happiness.

Hence, if the true God is adored, and if He is given the service of true sacrifice and of an upright life, then it is beneficial for good men to extend their empire far and wide and to rule for a long time. This is beneficial, not so much for themselves as for their subjects. Fear of God, and uprightness, God's great gifts, are enough for the true happiness of rulers, since this will enable them to spend this life well and thus win life eternal. On this earth, therefore, rule by good men is a blessing bestowed, not so much on themselves as upon mankind. But the rule of wicked men brings greater harm to themselves, since they ruin their own souls by the greater ease with which they can do wrong.

As for their subjects, only their own villainy can harm them. For, whatever injury wicked masters inflict upon good men is to be regarded, not as a penalty for wrong-doing, but as a test for their virtues. Thus, a good man, though a slave, is free; but a wicked man, though a king, is a slave. For he serves, not one man alone, but, what is worse, as many masters as he has vices. For, it is in reference to vice that the Holy Scripture says: 'For by whom a man is overcome, of the same also he is the slave.'[1]

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1 2 Pet. 2.19.

Chapter 4

In the absence of justice, what is sovereignty but organized brigandage? For, what are bands of brigands but petty kingdoms? They also are groups of men, under the rule of a leader, bound together by a common agreement, dividing their booty according to a settled principle. If this band of criminals, by recruiting more criminals, acquires enough power to occupy regions, to capture cities, and to subdue whole populations, then it can with fuller right assume the title of kingdom, which in the public estimation is conferred upon it, not by the renunciation of greed, but by the increase of impunity.

The answer which a captured pirate gave to the celebrated Alexander the Great was perfectly accurate and correct. When that king asked the man what he meant by infesting the sea, he boldly replied: 'What you mean by warring on the whole world. I do my fighting on a tiny ship, and they call me a pirate; you do yours with a large fleet, and they call you Commander.'

Chapter 5

I shall not press the inquiry as to what kind of people Romulus gathered around him to populate the city, since they gave him much to think about. His idea seemed to be that, if they gave up their bandit life and were received into the new city, they need no longer fear the penalties hanging over their heads, dread of which had driven them to commit more desperate crimes. Thenceforth, they would be a more peaceful element in human society. But, this much I say: The Roman Empire, which had already grown mighty by the conquest of many nations and had become an object of

dread to the rest, itself experienced bitter anxiety and grave fear. Only with great effort was it able to ward off a tremendous disaster when a handful of gladiators in Campania broke away from their school, organized a large army, put it under the command of three generals, and spread havoc and bloodshed throughout Italy.[1]

Let them tell us which of the gods made it possible for a small and contemptible gang of bandits to become a power strong enough to strike fear into the Romans, despite their forces and citadels. Will any one say that, because the day of their power was short, no help was therefore given from above? As though any man's life were a long affair! On that reckoning, then, the gods aid no one to sovereign power, since each individual lives but a brief time, and no one can regard it as a blessing, since, in a short space, for every individual man, and hence for all men together, it 'is a vapor which . . . shall vanish away.'[2]

What does it matter to those who worshiped the gods under Romulus, and are now long dead, that the Roman Empire grew to such proportions after their death? They are now only pleading their own causes in the lower regions, and whether their causes are good or bad is irrelevant here. This may be said of all, since each one, carrying the burden of his actions for the few short days of life, passed swiftly across the stage of imperial power—even though a long chain seems formed by the men who died and those who succeeded them in power.

Even if one must credit the gods for the benefactions of a brief period, then the gladiators just mentioned benefited from

1 The Third Servile War, led by the gladiator Spartacus, 73-71 B.C.
2 James 4.15.

the help of the gods in no small degree. They broke the chains of their bondage, ran off, escaped, raised a large and strong army, and, acting under the directions and orders of their chiefs, struck fear into the mighty Roman Empire. When several Roman generals could not put them down, they captured much booty, gained an impressive number of victories, plunged into dissipation, and gave free reign to indulgence. Until they were finally put down, and that with the greatest difficulty, they lived like kings in splendor. But, let us pass to more important topics.

Chapter 6

Summarizing the historian Trogus Pompeius, Justinus wrote in Latin a history of Greece, or, to be more exact, of the non-Roman nations.[1] He begins as follows: 'At the dawn of history, races and nations were ruled by kings raised to that eminence of power, not by courting popular favor, but by the recognition of the self-restraint which characterizes good men. The people were not bound by laws [for the will of the ruler took the place of law[2]]. They were more concerned in protecting their boundaries than in extending them. The jurisdiction of each king ended with the frontiers of his kingdom. Ninus, King of the Assyrians, driven by a lust for power hitherto unknown, was the first to change this time-honored and, I may say, inherited, tradition among the nations. He was the first to carry war into the territory of his neighbors and to subjugate, as far as the confines of Libya,

1 The historian Justinus, who flourished in the second half of the second century, composed a *History* in forty-four volumes which was supposed to be an epitome of the longer work of Gnaeus Pompeius Trogus, a contemporary of Livy (59 B.C.-A.D. 17).

2 The words in brackets do not appear in the best MSS.

backward tribes as yet unable to defend themselves.' A little further on he writes: 'Ninus thus consolidated the wide extent of the power he sought, by remaining in constant occupation of the captured lands. Acquiring more power by conquest of his frontier-neighbors, he passed on to successive conquests. He made each victory a stepping stone to another, until he finally subdued the nations of the entire Orient.' Whatever the trustworthiness of Justinus or Trogus, for it appears from more reliable sources that, in some matters, they did not report the truth, other historians do agree that King Ninus expanded the Empire of the Assyrians far and wide. Moreover, it stood for such a long time that the Roman Empire itself has not yet endured so long. As the writers of chronological history assure us, the Assyrian Empire lasted for 1240 years,[3] from the first of Ninus' reign till it passed into the hands of the Medes. Can waging war on neighbors, and then, by a series of wars, crushing and enslaving peaceful nations be called anything else but colossal brigandage?

Chapter 7

If the Assyrian Empire grew so vast and lasted so long without any help from the gods, why should the extensive territory and the long duration of the Roman Empire be credited to the Roman divinities? Whatever cause explains the growth of the one must explain the growth of the other. Should they insist that even the Assyrian Empire must thank the gods for their help, I ask: What gods? The nations Nimus vanquished and brought under his yoke worshiped the same gods as he. If the Assyrians had special gods of their own,

3 The number is taken from Eusebius' *Chronicle*. The destruction of Nineveh by Cyaxares, King of the Medes, is usually dated 612 B.C.

better skilled in building and preserving their empire, were they dead when the empire fell? Or, having received no pay, did they decide to pass over to the side of the Medes for larger pay promised to them? And did they, in turn, accept the invitation of Cyrus[1] and the ampler reward he held out to them to go over to the Persians? These people still continue, after the vast but short-lived empire of Alexander the Great, to hold sway over large regions of the East.

If that be so, the gods are traitors for deserting and passing over to the enemy. Even a man refused to perpetrate such an infamy. This was Camillus,[2] who, for having conquered and occupied a formidable city, was rewarded with the ingratitude of Rome, in whose name he had fought. But, forgetting the injustice, Camillus thought only of his country, and saved it a second time from the hands of the Gauls. If the gods are not traitors, then they are not as powerful as gods should be, since they can be overcome by human wit or force. Or again, if, fighting among themselves, the gods are beaten, not by men, but by other gods, the special tutelaries of each city, then they, too, carry on feuds of their own, in which each one joins according to the interests of his party. At any rate, the city owed no more worship to its own gods than it did to others who might bring it help.

Finally, however one is to take this passing over to the enemy, or flight, or migration, or desertion in battle, one thing is certain. In those early days, and in those parts of the world which saw the empires in question crash amid the havoc of war and fall into other hands, the name of Christ had not yet been preached. If twelve hundred and more

1 Cyrus the Great deposed Astyages, successor to Cyaxares, in 550 B.C. and took Babylon in 538.

2 For Camillus, see above, II 17 and III 17.

years ago, when the Assyrian Empire fell, the Christian religion had proclaimed an eternal kingdom and forbade sacrilegious worship of false gods, what would the foolish people of that race have said? What else but that the empire which had endured for so many centuries perished precisely because its cults were abandoned and the Christian religion was accepted in their place.

In a stupid complaint such as this, which might well have been made in those days, our accusers may well see their own image as in a mirror. If there is any shame left in them, they should blush to repeat it. However, the Roman Empire has been violently buffeted by storms, but not shattered. It experienced violent storms, too, before Christ's name was heard, but it weathered them all. Hence, there is no reason to despair in our own times. For, who can tell what is God's design in this matter?

Chapter 8

Let us now examine, if you please, which one god, or which gods, out of the vast horde the Romans adore, they believe particularly responsible for the growth and preservation of the Empire. Surely, they will not dare to ascribe any part of so superb and stately a work to the goddess of the sewers, for example, or to Volupia, so called from voluptuousness, or to Lubentina, who derives her name from lust, or to Vaticanus, who presides over the wailing (*vagitus*) of babies, or to Cunina, whose business is to attend to cradles (*cuna*). It is impossible to mention in one passage of this book all the names of the gods and goddesses which the pagans could scarcely find place for in the huge volumes where they indicate the special function assigned to each divinity.

They did not even believe that the protection of the

countryside should be entrusted to any one god, but appointed Rusina over the plains, Jugatinus over the mountain tops, Collatina over the hills, Vallorina over the valleys. They could not even find a single goddess Segetia to whom alone they might entrust all the crops, but for the sown seed, as long as it lay underground, they would have a goddess Seia, and, from the moment it sprouted to the time of its harvest, a Segetia to act as guardian. When the wheat was gathered and garnered, a Tutilina was to keep it safe. Surely, that one goddess Segetia alone could have managed things from the sprouting of the green blades to the drying of the ears.

It was not enough for the lovers of a swarm of gods to see the poor soul spurn the chaste embrace of the one true God, and prostitute itself to the rabble of demons. They wanted Proserpina in charge of the sprouting seed, the god Nodutus over the joints and knobs of the stalk, and Volutina over the sheaths enclosing the ears. When the sheaths open and the ears break through, then the goddess Patelana is on duty. When the new ears reach the height of the old stalks, the goddess Hostilina is put to work, because *hostire* was a verb the ancients used to mean 'to get even with.' When the wheat ripened, the goddess Flora was on the job. When it grew milky, the god Lacturnus presided; the goddess Matuta, when it ripened; Runcina, when it was 'runcated,' that is, pulled out of the ground. I refrain from naming all the specialists. It revolts me, though it does not shame them.

However, I have mentioned these very few instances to make clear that they have no right to affirm that the establishment, growth, and preservation of the Empire were due to that sort of divinities. Each was so confined to his particular function that no entire task was entrusted to any single one of them. How could Segetia take care of the Empire,

when she was not permitted to look after both the crops and the orchards? How could Cunina give thought to military affairs, when she was not allowed to go beyond minding babies' cradles? How could Nodutus give aid in war, when his sphere was restricted to the knots of the joints, and could not even include the sheath of the ear?

People post a single gatekeeper to guard the house, and, because he is a man, he is quite sufficient. But the pagans had to post three gods: Forculus at the door, Cardea at the hinges, Limentinus at the threshold. Forculus was evidently unable to guard the hinges and threshold, too.

Chapter 9

Leaving aside the swarm of petty gods, at least for a while, let us consider the activity of the major gods, which made Rome great enough to rule for so long over so many peoples. That, no doubt, is the work of Jupiter. These people look upon him as the king of all gods and goddesses, in token of which his sceptre and his temple are set on the Capitoline hilltop. Of him they brag—though it was a poet's expression —in the words: 'Everything is full of Jove.'[1] Varro, too, believes that Jupiter is also worshiped, under another name, by those who adore one single God without making any images of him. If that be true, why have the Romans, like other pagan races, dishonored him by making a statue in his likeness? Varro himself objected to the practice, so much so that, though he had to yield to the force of perverse custom in so large a state, he did not hesitate to declare and write that those who introduced statues among the people 'robbed them of reverence, and put error in its place.'

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1 Virgil, *Eclogues* 3.60.

Chapter 10

Why did they also provide Jupiter with a wife, Juno, and call her 'sister and spouse'? Because, they say, Jupiter represents the ether and Juno the air, and these two elements are conjoined—one as the upper and the other as the lower atmosphere. But, if Juno occupies a part of the world, the statement, 'Everything is full of Jove' is not true of Jupiter. Does each one fill both parts, and are the two mates in each and both of those elements and at the same time? Then, why is the ether assigned to Jove and the air to Juno? At any rate, these two should have been enough. Why, then, is the sea allotted to Neptune and the earth to Pluto? And, that neither might lack a consort, Salacia is given to Neptune and Proserpina to Pluto. For, as they try to explain, just as Juno occupies the lower part of the atmosphere, the air, so Salacia occupies the lower part of the sea, and Proserpina the lower part of the earth.

They seek in vain for devices on which to construct their fairy tales. If things were as they imagine, their ancient sages should have postulated three constituent elements of the world, not four, so that each of the elements might be assigned to each pair of divinities. But, in fact, they emphatically stated that ether is one thing; air, another. Yet, water, whether higher or lower, is still water. Even if you assume some difference in the levels, water is still certainly water. As for the lower earth, what else can it be but earth, however much it may differ from the upper?

You now have the physical world constituted, all complete, of four or of three elements. Where will you put Minerva? What part is she to hold and fill? There stands her temple on the Capitoline besides the others, though she is not their daughter. If they say that her domain is in the upper ether,

a notion which led the poets to conceive of her as sprung from the head of Jupiter, why is she not named queen of the gods, since she is above Jupiter? Was it because it would not be proper to set the daughter above the father? Then, why was not that same rule of right relations applied to Jupiter and Saturn? Was it because Saturn was beaten in battle? But, do gods go to war? Of course not, they say, that is a mere fable. We do not believe in tales; we must think better of the gods. Then, why was not the father of Jupiter given an equal place of honor, if not a higher? Because, they allege, Saturn is only a symbol of the duration of time. Therefore, in worshiping Saturn, they worship Time, implying that Jupiter, king of the gods, has Time for his father. Why, then, is it improper to say that Jupiter and Juno are born of Time, if he is the sky and she the earth, since both heaven and earth were created? This bit of theology is also down in the books of their scholars and sages.

Virgil[1] drew his inspiration, not from poetical fancies, but from the treatises of philosophers, when he wrote: 'Then the almighty father, the ether, came down in fruitful rain, in the bosom of his joyful spouse,'[2] meaning, in the bosom of Tellus or Earth. Even here they see some difference in the earth itself. They think that Terra is one thing, Tellus another, and Tellumo still another, and give to each deity a name of its own, a function of its own, and a shrine and sacrifice of its own. Moreover, they also call this same Terra mother of the gods, so that one can have more patience with the reveries of the poets than with the sacred, but not poetical, books of the pagans, which make Juno not only 'sister and

1 *Aeneid* 1.47.
2 *Georgics* 2.325,326.

spouse,' but also mother, of Jupiter. They would also identify this same Earth with Ceres, and likewise with Vesta.

More commonly, however, they believe that Vesta is but the fire that warms the hearth—failing which, there would be no city. Hence, the custom of dedicating virgins to its service, because nothing is born of fire, just as nothing is born of virgins. Surely, a stupid notion like this deserved to be banished and abolished by the One who was born of a virgin. Who can endure to see them paying to fire even the honor due to chastity, and yet feeling no shame in giving the name Venus to Vesta? When they do this they make a mockery of the virginity which is honored in her servants. For, if Vesta is merely Venus, how could virgins minister to her without imitating Venus? Are there two Venuses; one a virgin and the other a wife? Or, rather, three—one Vesta for virgins, another for married women, and a third for harlots? To this last, the Phoenicians offered the gift of prostituting their daughters before they gave them husbands.

Which of the three is the wife of Vulcan? Surely, not the virgin, since she has a husband. Heaven forbid that we should say the prostitute, lest we seem to cast dishonor on the son of Juno and the fellow worker of Minerva. Therefore, we must take it that Vulcan's wife is the Venus of the married women. We can only hope that such women will not imitate her affair with Mars! Again, they say that I go back to the fables. But, why get angry at me for saying such things about their gods, instead of at themselves for feasting their eyes on the villainies of those gods performed on the stage? And, though it would have been impossible to believe, had it not been proved beyond all doubt, the representations of these scandals were inaugurated as a tribute to the gods themselves.

Chapter 11

On the basis of every argument drawn from physical phenomena and from their discussions, let the learned pagans maintain all they please about Jove. Now, let him be the soul of this material world, filling and moving the vast structure of the universe, formed and compounded of four elements, or of as many as they please. Now, let Jupiter yield some parts of it to his sister and brothers. Again, let him be the ether embracing the underlying air, Juno. Now, let him be the entire sky and air together, and let him with fertile rains and seeds fecundate the earth—his wife and mother at the same time, for this is no scandal among the gods. Finally, not to run through all their theories, let him be the unique god to whom, according to the thinking of many, the celebrated poet refers when he says: 'God pervades all lands and all depths of the sea, all heights of the heavens.'[1]

Let him be Jupiter in the ether, Juno in the air, Neptune in the sea, Salacia in the depths of the sea, Pluto in the earth, Proserpina in the lower world, Vesta on domestic hearths, Vulcan in the forgers' furnace, the sun, moon and stars in the heavens, Apollo in the soothsayers, Mercury in commerce, the initiator as Janus, the terminator as Terminus. Let him be Saturn in time, Mars and Bellona in wars, Bacchus in the vineyards, Ceres in the wheatfields, Diana in the forests, Minerva in intellects. Finally, let him even be, if I may say so, in the horde of common gods. As Liber, let him preside over male seed; as Libra, over female. Let him be Dispater, who brings infants into the world; let him be the goddess Mena, appointed to supervise women's periods, and Lucina, invoked by women in childbirth. Let him come

1 *Georgics* 4.221,222.

to the aid of the newly born by lifting them from the lap of the earth, and be called Ops; let him open the mouths of wailing babies, and be called the god Vaticanus; let him lift them from the ground, and be called the goddess Levana; and, by guarding the cradles, be called Cunina. Let none but himself be in those goddesses who foretell the destinies of the newly born, and are called Carmentes.

Let him preside over chance events as Fortune, and as the goddess Rumina let him nurse the suckling, for *ruma* was the ancient word for breast. As the goddess Potina, let him administer drink; as the goddess Educa, proffer food. From the terror of infants, let him be called Paventia; from sudden hope, Venilia; from lust, Volupia; from activity, Agenoria; from the impulses that drive a man to excessive activity, the goddess Stimula; by inspiring energy, the divinity Strenua; by teaching to count, Numeria; by teaching to sing, Camena.

For the counsels he gives, let him be Consus; for suggesting good judgments, the goddess Sentia. Let him be the goddess Juventas, who takes charge of the entry into youth after a boy has assumed the toga. Let him also be Fortuna Barbata, who puts a beard on those grown to manhood—although, if they really wished to honor grown men they would have addressed a male divinity by a male name, Barbatus from his beard, like Nodutus from the knots, or, least, they would not have called him Fortuna, since he had a beard, but Fortunius. As the god Jugatinus, let Jupiter join couples in marriage; when the virgin wife's girdle is loosed, let him be invoked as the goddess Virginiensis. Let him be Mutunus, or Tutunus, known among the Greeks as Priapus.

If the pagans are not ashamed of it, let the one Jupiter be all the things I have said, and all the things I have not said—for there is much I could not say. Let him be all these

gods and goddesses, whether they are all parts of him, as some would have it, or powers, as those believe who like to conceive of him as the world-soul. This latter is the view of their great and very learned men.

If this be true—I do not yet inquire just what the situation is—what could the Romans lose if, with a wiser economy, they should worship one God? What part of His creation would be despised if He himself were adored? If it is to be feared that some parts of Jupiter would be enraged for being passed over or ignored, then it is not true, as they maintain, that he is the all-embracing total life of one life-giving being, who contains all the other gods as being his powers, or members, or parts. But if one part can become angry, another be pacified, and a third be irritated—independently of one another—then, each has its own life distinct from the rest.

On the other hand, if it be maintained that all parts together, that is, the totality of Jove himself, could be angered if his parts were not worshiped also, individually, that is talking sheer nonsense. No single one of those parts would be overlooked as long as the object of worship is the very totality which contains them all. To avoid endless details, let me observe that when they assert that all the heavenly bodies are parts of Jove, that all have life and rational souls, and that all are most certainly gods, there are certain things they overlook. They do not see, for example, how many gods remain without worship, how many have no temples or altars built to them, and to how few of the heavenly bodies they thought of dedicating such things, and of offering special sacrifices. If, therefore, the stars are wrathful because each is not given its own special worship, do not the pagans dread to live under the wrath of the entire heaven, since they appeased only a few gods?

But, if their worship comprises all the gods because all are contained in the Jove they honor by that procedure, they could invoke them all in the person of the one Jove. In this way, no one would become offended, since, as part of that unity, no one would be slighted. This would be preferable to worshiping only a few, thereby giving just cause of resentment to those who are ignored, and who are far more numerous. Their resentment would be particularly justified if, among the worshiped ones shining in splendor, they saw Priapus in his obscene nakedness given a primary place.

Chapter 12

What can be said of another absurdity? It should stir men of intelligence, and even the ordinary man—for no intellectual genius is needed here—to lay aside bitter contention, and face squarely this question: Is God the soul of the world, and is the world as the body of this soul in such wise that the two together make up a living organism composed of body and soul? Does this God, like nature's womb, so to speak, contain all things in Himself, so that His soul, which vitalizes the entire mass, is the source of the life and the soul of all living things, according to the lot determined for each one at birth? Does nothing remain which is not a part of God?

If this be true, does anyone fail to see how impious and blasphemous is the conclusion that follows: When anyone tramples on anything, he tramples on God; when he kills any living thing, he kills God! I refuse to set forth all the conclusions which thinking men can draw, but which they cannot express without shame.

Chapter 13

If they contend that only rational animals, as men are, are parts of God, then, on the assumption that the whole world is God, I really fail to see how they can exclude brute animals from being parts of Him. But, there is no need of arguing about that. Only consider the same rational being, man. Can you imagine anything more absurd than that, when a boy is whipped, God is whipped? Who but a madman could tolerate the idea that 'parts' of God should become lustful, wicked, impious, and thoroughly damnable? Then, by what right could God frown on those who do not worship Him, since it is His own 'parts' who do not do so?

The only thing left for our adversaries is to admit that all the gods have their own lives, that each one lives for himself, that none of them is part of anything. All are to be worshiped as far as they can be known and worshiped, but there are too many for all to be worshiped. Because Jupiter is their king, for that reason, I suppose, he is given credit for the establishment and growth of the Roman Empire. If this is not his achievement, what other god do they believe capable of undertaking a task so vast? Is not each busy with his own duties and particular work, no one interfering with another? So, they conclude that only by the King of the gods could the kingdom of men have been extended and made great.

Chapter 14

At this point, I ask: Why is not the empire itself a god of some kind? If Victory is a goddess, why not the empire? What need is there of Jupiter himself in this matter, if Victory shows herself favorable and propitious, and always goes

to the side of those she would see victorious? Once her favor and good will are gained, what nations would retain their independence, even if Jupiter had nothing to do, or was otherwise engaged? What kingdom would refuse to surrender? But, possibly, just men hesitate to engage in unjust wars or to provoke peaceful neighbors who are doing no kind of wrong, merely for aggrandisement. If they really feel that way, I highly approve and commend their sentiments.

Chapter 15

Let our accusers consider, therefore, that perhaps it is not fitting for good men to rejoice in the extent of their power. For, what really increased the empire's expansion was the wickedness of those against whom wars were justly waged. The empire would, indeed, have remained small if the peace and fair-dealing of their neighbors had provoked no wars. Thus, in a happier state of human relations, all kingdoms would remain small, and rejoice in their neighborly concord. Thus, also, there would have been in the world a great many nations, as there are many families in a city. Hence, wars and conquests may rejoice unprincipled men, but are a sad necessity in the eyes of men of principle. However, it would be still more unfortunate for wrong-doers to dominate just men; so, even this necessity may properly be regarded by good men as fortunate.

But, beyond doubt, it is a greater blessing to have a good and friendly neighbor than to have to subdue one who has taken up arms against you. It is a sign of bad will to desire a detestable and dangerous neighbor, just to have someone to conquer. If, therefore, by waging, not unscrupulous and criminal, but just, wars, the Romans succeeded in building

up a mighty empire, why should not the wickedness of others be adored as a goddess? In fact, we know that such wickedness had much to do with the expansion of the empire. It aroused obnoxious people, against whom just wars might be waged, with consequent additions to the empire. Why, then, should not the wickedness of foreign nations be accounted a goddess, if Fear, Dread, and Fever deserved to be divinized by the Romans?

Hence, as a result of the activity of these two divinities, the Wickedness of others and the goddess Victory, when Wickedness caused wars, Victory brought them to a successful issue, and the empire grew mightier even while Jove was taking a holiday. For, what was there left for him to do, while those gifts which might be regarded as coming from his hands were themselves considered gods, called gods, worshiped as gods, and supplicated for favors? He, too, might indeed have a part to play here, if he were called Empire, as she is called Victory. Or, if the Empire is Jove's gift, why is not Victory also so regarded? That would certainly have been the case, if, instead of a stone figure in the Capitol, people acknowledged and adored the true 'King of kings and Lord of lords.'

Chapter 16

What most astonishes me is that pagans attached a divinity to every object and to almost every motion. They instituted public rites for all these gods and goddesses. Thus, they called Agenoria the goddess who stirred to action; Stimula, the one who spurred on to excessive action; Murcia, the one who went to the other extreme and held a man back from action, making him *murcidus,* as Pompeius says, that is, inordinately languid and inactive; and Strenua, who im-

pells to vigorous action. But, strange to say, they paid no such honor to the goddess Repose, although there was a temple to Quies outside the Colline Gate. Was this neglect a sign of a restless spirit, or did it, rather, mean that the man who insisted on worshiping that mob of gods—or, rather, demons —could not find that rest to which the true Physician invites us in the words: 'Learn of Me, because I am meek, and humble of heart: and you shall find rest for your souls'?[1]

Chapter 17

They may possibly reply that Jupiter is the one who sends Victory on her mission and that, in compliance with the wishes of the King of the gods, she goes to the people designated, and fights on their side. This, however, can truly be said, not of that Jupiter they arbitrarily imagine to be King of the gods, but only of that true King of the ages, who despatches, not Victory, who has no real existence, but His angel, and grants victory to whom He wills. His designs may at times be hidden, but they can never be wicked.

If Victory is a goddess, why is not Triumph also a god, joined to Victory either as husband, brother, or son? These pagans have conceived notions about the gods which, if created by the poet's fancy, or criticized by us, they would brand as ridiculous poets' dreams, unworthy of being predicated of real gods. Yet, they did not ridicule themselves, either for reading such absurdities in the poets, or for actually worshiping them in the temples. The pagans should, therefore, invoke Jupiter in all their needs and address their supplications to him alone. For, if Victory is a divinity subject to that King, and he sent her anywhere, she could not dare oppose him and do what she herself pleased.

1 Matt. 11.29.

Chapter 18

How does it happen that Felicity is also a goddess? They built her a temple, rewarded her with an altar, and performed suitable rites in her honor. Therefore, she alone should have been worshiped. For, what good is absent when she is present, and what sense is there in also believing in, and paying worship to, the goddess Fortune? Is Felicity one thing and Fortune another? Yes, they say, because fortune can be adverse, while, if felicity is adverse, it is not felicity. Surely, we must regard the divinities of both sexes (supposing they can have sex) as nothing but good. Plato says so, the other philosophers say so, and distinguished leaders of the state and of the people say so.

How does it happen, then, that the goddess Fortune is now good, now evil? Can it be that when she is evil she is no longer a goddess, but suddenly turned into a malevolent demon? How many goddesses of that kind are there? As many, surely, as there are fortunate men, or men who enjoy good fortune. But, as there are many other men who at one and the same time with the others are pursued by evil fortune, would Fortune, if it were the bad one, be good and bad at the same time: Good to some; bad to others? Or is the Fortune who is a goddess always good? Then, she is Felicity; why give her two names? However, we can bear with that, since it is common enough to call the same thing by two names.

But, why give them different temples, different altars, different rites? That, they allege, is because felicity is to be understood as the happy state awarded to good people for the good things they have already done, while the fortune which men call good falls to the good and the bad indiscriminately, taking no account of merits. Hence, she is

called Fortune. But, how can that be good which favors both the good and the bad without distinction? Why pay divine honors to a being who gropes about so blindly that for the most part she passes by her own suppliants and clings to her defamers? Or, if her devotees do anything to deserve her favorable attention and good will, then she takes their merits into account and does not stumble upon them by chance.

What are we to think of that definition of Fortune? What are we to think of a deity who derives her name from chance happenings? If she is merely chance, it is sheer waste of time to worship her. If, on the contrary, she discriminates among her suppliants in order to benefit the good, then she is not chance. Does Jupiter send her wherever he will? In that case, he alone should be worshiped. For, Fortune cannot refuse to obey any command of his, or go wherever he may wish to send her. Let only the wicked be her suppliants, the people who have no intention of acquiring those merits by which Felicity might be attracted.

Chapter 19

The pagans make so much of this alleged divinity they call Fortune that, as one tradition has it, her statue (which was dedicated by women and therefore called Fortuna Muliebris) actually spoke and declared more than once that the women had honored her in true religious form. We need not wonder if that is really true. It is not hard for evil spirits to practise deception even with such tricks. But, the fact that the goddess who spoke is the one who happens upon people by accident, not the one who seeks out the meritorious, should have put the pagans on their guard against the demons' wiles.

Why was Fortune loquacious and Felicity silent? Only in order that men, once they had Fortune on their side, might go on leading any kind of life, knowing that Fortune would bestow her favor on them without considering whether or not they deserved it. At any rate, if Fortune did speak, it should have been the Fortune of men rather than of women—to avoid the impression that the prodigy was nothing but the gossip of the women who dedicated the statue.

Chapter 20

The pagans also deified Virtue. Surely, if she were really a goddess, she should have been set above many other divinities. Since, however, she is not a goddess, but a gift of God, we should beg virtue from the only one who can bestow it. The whole swarm of false gods will vanish like mist. But, why was Faith also reckoned a goddess, and she, too, given a temple and an altar? Any one who comes to know faith really and practically already builds her a temple in his heart. But, how can the pagans know what faith is, when its first and highest demand is that men should believe in the true God? Why was not virtue enough for them, since faith is included in it? They thought it necessary to make a fourfold division of virtue: prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance. Since each of these kinds has its own subspecies, faith is reckoned a part of justice, and is accorded first place among us who appreciate the significance of the words: 'The just men liveth by faith.'[1] I am astonished at the fanatical multipliers of gods. If faith is a goddess, why did they insult so many other goddesses by ignoring them and not raising temples and altars in their honor also?

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1 Rom. 1.17 (from Hab. 2.4).

Why was not temperance thought worthy to be a goddess? Many men of high rank won no small glory in her name. Finally, why was not fortitude ranked among the deities? She stood by Mucius when he held his right hand in the flame. She stood by Curtius, who for his country plunged headlong into the chasm. She stood by the Decii, father and son, when they sacrificed their lives for the safety of the army. Whether it was real fortitude which inspired these men is not the question here. Why did not prudence, why did not wisdom deserve a divine abode? Is it because they are all honored under the general title of Virtue? Then, He alone who is God could have been honored, since the rest of the gods are looked upon as parts of Him. But in that one general virtue are included faith and chastity, and both of these had altars in their own temples.

Chapter 21

Not truth, but folly, created these goddesses. These are gifts of the true God, and not goddesses at all. Where virtue and felicity are found, what else remains to be desired? If virtue and felicity cannot suffice a man, what will? For, virtue includes all things to be done, and felicity all things to be desired. If extent and duration of empire are blessings, they affect that same felicity. If Jupiter was worshiped that he might grant these blessings, why did they fail to understand that those things are gifts of God, and not divinities? Even if they took them for divinities, they could at least have dispensed with the rest of the polytheistic horde.

Let us examine the functions which our accusers have arbitrarily assigned to all the gods and goddesses, and ask them to discover, if they can, any boon which any god could bestow on a man possessed of virtue and felicity. What

knowledge would one need to beg from Mercury or Minerva, when virtue in itself contains all blessings? The ancients defined virtue as the art of living well and rightly—assuming that the Latin *ars* was derived from the Greek *arete,* or virtue. But, if virtue comes only to the clever, what need was there of the god, Pater Catius, to make men alert or sharp, since Felicity could furnish this? To be born clever is surely a stroke of felicity. Therefore, even if the unborn child could not supplicate the goddess Felicitas to be kind and grant him that gift, she would confer upon the parents, her devotees, the happiness of bringing forth talented children.

To what purpose would women in childbirth invoke Lucina, when, with Felicitas attending, they could not only bear the child safely, but also bear good children? For the same reason, why recommend children to the goddess Ops as they come into the world; to the god Vaticanus when they cry; to the goddess Cunina as they lie in the cradle; to the goddess Rumina whey they suck; to the god Statilinus when they begin to stand; to the goddess Adeona when they toddle toward you; to Abeona when the toddle away; to the goddess Mens that they have a good mind; to the deities Volumnus and Volumna that they may will good things; to the nuptial divinities that they may marry well; to the agricultural gods that they may gather abundance of produce, especially to the goddess Fructesea herself; to Mars and Bellona that they may fight well in war; to the goddess Victory that they may win; to the god Honos that they may be honored; to the goddess Pecunia that they may always have plenty of money; to the god Aesculanus and his son Argentinus that they may always have copper and silver coin?

They make Aesculanus the father of Argentinus, because copper money came into use before silver money. I am sur-

prised that Argentinus did not beget Aurinus, since gold coin came into use even later. If the pagans had had that god, they would have set him before his father Argentinus and his grandfather Aesculanus, just as they now place Jove before Saturn. What need, therefore, was there of worshiping and invoking a horde of divinities to obtain spiritual, corporal, or external blessing? These divinities are so numerous that I have not mentioned them all, nor could the pagans themselves provide gods, or fragments of gods, for all the goods of human life, taken singly or in parts. Since the one goddess Felicity could have conferred all possible favors with an enormous and simple economy of effort, should any other divinity be sought either to bring down blessings or to ward off misfortunes?

Why should one have to supplicate the divinity Fessona in behalf of the weary; the goddess Pellonia for repulsing enemies; the physicians Apollo or Aesculapius in behalf of the sick, or both together when the danger was great? What need of importuning the god Spinensis for clearing thorns from the fields, or the goddess Rubigo for keeping off mildew? With Felicity's protecting presence, either no evils would arise, or they would be most easily banished. Finally, since we are dealing with the two goddesses Virtue and Felicity, if felicity is a reward of virtue, it is not a goddess, but a gift of God; if it is a goddess, why cannot it be said to bestow virtue, since even to attain virtue is a great felicity?

Chapter 22

What, therefore, is to be thought of the inestimable service which Varro boasts of having done for his countrymen, not only be enumerating the gods the Romans must worship,

but also by specifying the function appropriate to each? It is useless, he says, to know a certain doctor by name and appearance, but not to know what a doctor is. So, also, it is useless to know that Aesculapius is a god, but not to know that he can give you good health, and consequently not to know why you should invoke him.

To drive home his point, he uses another comparison. It is impossible for anyone, he says, not merely to live well, but to live at all, if he does not know who is a smith, who a baker, who a plasterer; if he does not know from whom he can seek household necessaries, whom to take as helper, whom as leader, whom as teacher. In like manner, he assures us, there can be no doubt that a knowledge of the gods is useful only when one has an idea in what affairs each god has efficacy, ability and power. 'Thus,' he continues, 'we shall be able to know which god to call upon and invoke for any need, so that we may not ask, like the clowns, for water from Bacchus and wine from the Lymphae.' Useful knowledge, indeed! We would have been grateful to Varro if he had taught the truth, taught men that they should adore the one true God, from whom all gifts come.

Chapter 23

But, to keep to our subject, if their books and rituals tell the truth, and Felicity is a goddess, why was she alone not worshiped, since it was in her power to bestow all blessings and make men happy by a short cut? What else but to be happy does any man desire? Why did so many rulers of Rome ignore so mighty a goddess till Lucullus erected a temple in her honor?[1] Why did Romulus himself, who desired to found

1 In 75 B.C.

a happy city, not build a temple for her in the first place, and not have to beg the other gods for anything—since nothing is lacking if she is present? He himself would never have become king, or later, as they fancy, a god, had she not stood by him. Why, then, did he thrust upon the Romans so many gods: Janus, Jove, Mars, Picus, Faunus, Tiberinus, Hercules, and the rest? Why did Titus Tatius add Saturn, Ops, Sol, Luna, Vulcan, Lux, and still others (including Cloacina), yet scorn Felicity? Why should Numa omit her from among so many other gods and goddesses? Could he not see her for the crowd? Assuredly, King Hostilius himself would not have dragged in the new divinities Fear and Dread to be propitiated, had he known her or been one of her devotees. For, had she been there, Fear and Dread would not merely have departed appeased—they would have been driven out and would have fled.

Again, how was it that the Roman Empire expanded far and wide, yet no one worshiped Felicity? Was the Empire more extensive than happy? How can there be real felicity where there is no real piety? Piety is the true worship of the true God, not the worship of a host of false gods—every one a demon. Even afterwards, when Felicity had been given a place among the gods, the terrible infelicity of the civil wars followed. Was Felicity perhaps justifiably angered for being passed over so long and then at last brought in, not to her honor, but to the disgrace of seeing herself put on a level with Priapus and Cloacina, Fear and Dread, Fever and others who were not divinities worth worshiping, but a disgrace to their worshipers? Lastly, if it seemed unworthy of so great a goddess to associate her with the worship of a disreputable rabble, why was she not accorded higher honors than the rest? It is intolerable to think that Felicity was not ranked

with the divine Counsellors, who, they say, form Jupiter's council, or with the gods they call 'select.' A temple should have been built to her which, in eminence of position and in magnificence of architecture, would be unsurpassed. Why should she not have an even better one than Jupiter himself? For, who but Felicity gave Jupiter his kingdom, supposing that he was really happy as king? Felicity is more blessed than a kingdom. No one doubts that it is easy to find a man who shrinks from becoming a king, but no man can be found who does not wish to be happy.

Suppose that the temples and altars of the other gods filled the available space on which a larger and more magnificent temple might be raised to Felicity. Suppose, too, that by means of auguries, or by any other procedure judged effectual, the gods were asked their wishes as to whether they would make room for Felicity. Jupiter himself would yield his place, that Felicity might have it upon the very crest of the Capitoline Hill. Nor would anyone protest against Felicity unless, which is impossible, he wished to be unhappy.

Were Jupiter asked his opinion, he certainly would not have been so discourteous as the three gods, Mars, Terminus, and Juventas, were to him when they utterly refused to relinquish their place to their superior and king. The story is told by their own writers that King Tarquinius wished to build a temple to Jupiter Capitolinus. But, he perceived that the site he thought most proper and suitable was already occupied by other gods, of whom many had their temples in the area where the Capitol was eventually erected. Not venturing, therefore, to take any steps without their consent, and feeling confident that they would defer to the wishes of a mighty divinity who was also their chief, Tarquinius had the augurs ask whether they would not resign their place

to Jove. The answer was definitely affirmative, on the part of all save the ones I mentioned: Mars, Terminus, and Juventas. That is why the Capitol was constructed in such a way as to enclose the three, but with their statues so hidden away that the greatest sages of Rome could scarcely tell where they stood.

Jupiter himself would never treat Felicity so discourteously as Terminus, Mars and Juventas had treated him. The very ones who would not make way for Jove would unquestionably yield place to Felicity, who had made him their king. If they did not yield, it was not out of disrespect, but because they preferred to remain unknown in Felicity's temple rather than sit in majesty without her in their own places.

Thus, with Felicity enthroned on a spacious and lofty seat, the citizens would soon learn from whom to beg the fulfillment of every good desire. Common sense alone would prompt them to reject the rest of the useless rabble of gods, to confine their worship to Felicity, and to pray to her alone. Into her temple alone would stream citizens who desired to be happy—and none would not. Thus, the felicity which was sought from all the gods would be enough from Felicity alone. For, who wishes to receive from any god anything but felicity, or whatever he judges conducive to it? Therefore, if Felicity has it in her power to abide with whom she will—and she has, if she is a goddess—what folly to seek felicity from some other god, when you can obtain it from Felicity herself!

Hence, this goddess should be honored above all other deities in the grandeur of her place of enthronement. For, as may be read in their writings, the ancient Romans worshiped a certain Summanus, to whom they ascribed the thunder of the night, above Jove, who ruled the thunder of the day.

But, after a magnificent and lofty temple was raised to Jove, the grandeur of the structure drew the multitude in such numbers that soon one was scarcely to be found who had heard the name of Summanus, or who recalled even having read about him.

But, if Felicity is not a goddess because, in truth, it is one of God's gifts, then seek the God who can bestow it. Forsake the deadly pack of false deities which the foolish rabble run after, making for themselves gods out of God's gifts, and by their obstinate self-will offending God Himself, the Author of the gifts. No man can avoid infelicity who worships Felicity as a goddess and turns his back on the Giver of felicity, even as he cannot but hunger who licks the picture of a loaf and fails to ask the real loaf of the man who has it.

Chapter 24

Let us now consider the pagans' arguments. They ask: Are we to consider that our ancestors were so stupid as not to realize these virtues to be God's gifts, and not gods in themselves? Since they knew that such gifts are not bestowed on anyone except by some god, whose name they did not know, they simply designated gods by the name of those gifts they believed conferred by the gods. They did this by modifying the words, as when they called the war goddess Bellona, not Bellum; the goddess of cradles Cunina, not Cuna; the harvest god Segetia, not Seges; the orchard goddess Pomona, not Pomum; the cattle goddess Bubona, not Bos.

Or, on the other hand, without changing the word at all, they simply, by a mental distinction, transferred the names of the things themselves to the goddesses. Thus, when they called Pecunia the goddess who gives money, they by no

means mistook the money for the goddess herself. So also with Virtue, who bestows virtue; Honor, who confers honor; Concord, who grants concord; Victory, who accords victory. So, they conclude, when Felicity is called a goddess, they understand thereby not the felicity that is given, but the divinity who gives felicity.

Chapter 25

On the basis of this explanation, we may possibly find less difficulty in drawing to our way of thinking those who have not hardened their hearts unduly. For, human weakness has become aware that only a god has the power to bestow felicity, and those men were conscious of this who paid worship to the crowd of deities with Jupiter as their sovereign. Since they were ignorant of the name of Him who bestows felicity, they decided to call Him by the name of His gift. They, thus made it clear that the Jupiter they worshiped could give no felicity, but only that other deity which was to be worshiped under the name of Felicity.

I entirely agree that they believed felicity to be the gift of a God unknown to them. Then let them seek Him, let them adore Him. He suffices. Let them reject the noisy rabble of demons! Let this God not suffice that man—if there is such a man—whom His gift does not suffice. Let the worship of the true God, the Giver of felicity, not suffice the man who is not content with receiving that felicity. But, let the man for whom happiness suffices—and a man should desire no more—serve the one God from whom happiness comes. He is not the one they call Jupiter, for, if Jupiter were the bestower of felicity, they would not be seeking, under the name of the same felicity, for another god or goddess to give them felicity. Nor would they have thought of paying Jupi-

ter himself an honor so deeply stained with infamy. For, he is considered a betrayer of other men's wives and an unnatural lover and robber of a lovely boy.

Chapter 26

But, writes Cicero: 'These were inventions of Homer, who transferred human weaknesses to the gods. Would that he had transferred divine virtues to us.'[1] Justly is that serious-minded man indignant at the poet who invented the scandalous actions of the gods. Why, then, are the stage plays, in which these villainies are declaimed, sung and acted, presented in honor of the gods, and written down by the most learned pagans as parts of their religion? Here, Cicero should have cried out, not against the fictions of the poets, but against the institutions of the ancients. But, would not they, in their turn, cry out and ask: 'What have we done? The gods themselves demanded those scandals to be performed in their honor. They wickedly ordered them, threatening non-compliance with reprisal. They pitilessly punished any neglect and, when the neglect was remedied, showed signs that they were appeased.' A proof of their extraordinary power and of the wonders they could work is the incident I am about to relate.

Titus Latinius, a Roman farmer and head of a family, was bidden in a dream to go to the Senate and tell the fathers to restore the Roman stage plays. The reason given him was that, on the first day of their presentation, a criminal had been ordered to public execution, and that the gods had found no pleasure in the painful affair. What they looked for in

1 *Tusculan Disputations* 1.26.

the plays was diversion. The next day, the man did not dare carry out the order he had received in the dream. On the second night, therefore, he received a more menacing order, but, as he again failed to carry it out, he lost his son. On the third night, he was warned that, should he again fail to obey, a still worse penalty threatened. Again his courage failed, and this time he was stricken with a painful and horrible disease.

Then, on the advice of friends, he reported the affair to the magistrates and had himself carried to the Senate in a litter. When he told his dream, the illness suddenly left him, and he walked off on his own feet a cured man. Struck with wonder at so great a prodigy, the Senate voted a renewal of the plays with a fourfold appropriation of money. Any man of sense can see that men, under the domination of demons, are compelled to perform for gods of that sort acts which sound judgment would pronounce indecent. From such a slavery only the grace of God through Jesus Christ our Lord can deliver them.

In those plays, the misdeeds of the gods are represented as the poets imagined them, yet the Senate ordered the renewal of those plays, because the gods commanded them to do so. In those stage plays the vilest actors sang, acted and amused Jupiter, as a corrupter of purity. If those obscenities were fables, Jupiter should have been infuriated. But, if he took delight in his debaucheries even when unreal, then to worship him is to serve the Devil himself. Is this the being who founded, extended, and preserved the Roman Empire—a being more contemptible than any Roman who sickened at beholding those scenes of debauchery? Is he the one to give us happiness—a god whose worship was attended by such depravity, and one who would have been so disgracefully angry, were he not so worshiped?

Chapter 27

We are told in pagan writings that the learned pontifex Scaevola distinguished three classes of divinities handed down to us: the first, by the poets; the second, by the philosophers; the third, by the statesmen. According to him, the first category is useless, because the poets imagined the gods full of vices. The second is ill-suited to states, because there was in it much that was superfluous, and certain things in it would be dangerous for the people to know. As to the superfluous, that is of little importance, for even lawyers have a saying, 'What is left over does no harm.'

But, what is that which it would be harmful for the people to know? 'It would be,' he says, 'to say openly that Hercules, Aesculapius, Castor, and Pollux are not gods. For, the philosophers inform us that they were human beings, and went to their graves like human beings.' What else do they reveal? 'That the cities have no true images of those who are gods, since the true God has neither sex, nor age, nor definite bodily form.' The pontifex wishes to keep the people ignorant of this, for he considers it to be true. Yet, he judges it expedient to deceive the citizens in matters of religion. Nor does Varro himself hesitate to affirm the same thing in his work *On Divine Things.*

A glorious religion indeed! A haven of refuge for a weak man in need of liberation! When he seeks the truth that makes him free, it is thought best for him to be duped! In the same writings, Scaevola makes no secret of the reasons he had for rejecting the gods of the poets. It is because 'they so distort them that the gods cannot be compared even with decent men. One they turn into a thief, another into an adulterer, and otherwise make them talk and act like degenerates and fools, such as the three goddesses who fought among them-

selves for the prize of beauty, and destroyed Troy when two of them were bested by Venus. Jove himself is transformed into a bull or a swan in order to carry on amours with some wanton or other. A goddess marries a man. Saturn devours his children. In fine, no prodigy nor vice can be imagined which is not here, however, utterly irreconcilable with their divine nature.

O Scaevola, pontifex, abolish those plays if you can. Forbid the people to pay to the immortal gods honors of that sort, in which they feast their eyes on divine depravities, and imitate them, as far as possible, in their own lives. If the people retort: 'You, yourselves, high priests, brought them to us,' beg of the gods at whose instigation you imposed those horrors to exact no performance of them in their honor!

If these rites are evil, and therefore utterly incompatible with the majesty of the gods, then the wrong done to them is the greater because the tales are concocted with impunity. But, they will not listen to you; they are demons, teachers of depravity, delighting in obscenity. They take it as no affront to have such things written about them. But, they would take it as an intolerable affront if these indecencies were not exhibited in their solemn festivals. In fact, if you appeal to Jupiter against them, especially since many of his own evil deeds are acted in the plays, though you proclaim him the divine ruler and governor of the world, are you not offering him the greatest insult when you associate his worship with that of those filthy divinities, and name him their king?

Chapter 28

Gods of that sort, appeased, or rather dishonored, and thereby more vicious for taking delight in the filthy falsehoods ascribed to them than they would have taken if they

were true, could never have extended and preserved the Roman Empire. Were this in their power, it is upon the Greeks they should have conferred so great a favor. For, in this kind of religious observance, in stage plays, I mean, the Greeks treated the gods with more honor and dignity. They did not themselves dodge the barbs of the poets, by which they saw the gods torn to pieces, since they gave their poets full freedom to abuse any persons they pleased, nor did they class the comedians themselves as infamous. On the contrary, they even held them worthy of high honors.

Just as the Romans could have had gold money without worshiping the god Aurinus, so they could have had silver and copper money without worshiping either Argentinus or his father Aesculanus. So with the rest, which it would be wearisome for me to repeat. So, also, they could have had their empire, though by no means against the will of the true God. But, if they had ignored and despised that mob of false gods, and, with sincere faith and right living, acknowledged and worshiped that one God alone, they would have won a better kingdom, whether large or small, here below, and, with or without one here, they would have received an eternal one hereafter.

Chapter 29

What sort of an augury was that, which the pagans acclaimed as so wonderful? I mean the one I mentioned above, by which Mars, Terminus, and Juventas refused to give place to Jove, the King of the gods. This, the pagans claim, indicated that the race of Mars—the Romans—should give place to none; that no one should drive the Romans from their frontiers set for them by the god Terminus; and that, by the aid of the goddess Juventas, the youth of Rome would yield

to no one. Do they realize how inconsistently they treat as the King of their gods and the bestower of their kingdom one whom the auguries set down as an enemy to whom it would be honorable not to yield? Though, indeed, if these things are true, they have nothing to fear. They will not admit that those gods who would not give place to Jove have given place to Christ. Yet, with no change in the frontiers of the empire, they have yielded to Christ and have been driven from the temples, and especially from the hearts of their worshipers.

Before Christ came in the flesh, and before what I have quoted from their books was written, but after that augury occurred under King Tarquinius, the Roman army was several times scattered or put to flight. Thus, the augury according to which Juventas did not give place to Jove was proved false. The race of Mars was overcome within the city itself by the attack of the conquering Gauls, and the frontiers of the empire were contracted by the defection of many cities to Hannibal. So, the trustworthiness of the auspices was made void, and all that remained was the defiance of Jove, not by gods, but by demons. For, it is one thing not to have given place at all, and another to have given place and then to have returned.

Later on, by the will of Hadrian, the eastern frontiers of the empire were changed.[1] For, he surrendered to the Persian Empire three splendid provinces, Armenia, Mesopotamia, and Assyria. Thus, it would appear that the god Terminus, who was to protect the Roman frontiers for them, and who, according to that fine divination, would not give place even to Jove, was more afraid of Hadrian, a king of men, than

1 In 117 B.C.

of the King of the gods. Those provinces were later recovered, but almost within our memory Terminus again gave ground, when Julian, obeying the oracles of those gods, stupidly ordered the supply ships to be burned.[2] Thus, the army, left without provisions and with the leader slain by the enemy, was so weakened that, terrified by the death of the general, not a single soldier would have escaped the fierce attack of the enemy had they not accepted a treaty which set limits to the empire. The ceded territory is still held by the enemy, though the compromise was not as harmful as the agreement made by Hadrian.

Thus, it was a futile augury, for the god Terminus, who would not yield to Jove, yielded to the will of Hadrian, to the imprudence of Julian, and to the compulsion of Jovian. This the more intelligent and serious-minded among the Romans understand. But, against the custom of the state, which had been delivered into bondage to the rites of the demons, they could do little, since they themselves, though they realized the futility of these rites, still thought that nature, though created under the rule and dominion of the one true God, should be accorded the divine worship due to Him alone. St. Paul states this in the words, 'and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever.'[3] There was need of the aid of this true God who sent holy men of real piety to die for the true religion, that the world might be freed from false ones.

Chapter 30

Cicero, who was an augur, scoffed at the auguries, and

2 A.D. 363

3 Rom. 1.25.

reproved men for regulating their lives by the bird calls of a raven or a little crow. But, that philosopher of the New Academy, who holds that nothing is certain, does not, perhaps, deserve to be trusted in these matters. Quintus Lucilius Balbus discusses these points in Cicero's *De natura deorum* (Book II), and, though he traces these superstitions to nature and gives them physical and philosophical interpretations, he takes offense at the institution of images and the belief in fables. He says, 'Do you not see, then, that from the good and useful knowledge gained from physical things reason was misled toward imaginary and fictitious gods? This gave rise to false opinions, disturbing errors, and even old-womanish superstitions. We knew the outward appearance of the gods, their age, their clothing, their ornaments, as well as their genealogies, their marriages, their relations, all transformed to the likeness of human weakness. For, they are pictured as having disordered minds; we know their passions, their infirmities, their rages. Nor, as the fables relate, have they been free from wars, not only as when in Homer some gods gave aid to one side, some to the other, of two opposing armies, but also they waged war among themselves, as with the Titans or with the Giants. These things are asserted and most foolishly believed, though they are frivolous and utterly groundless.'[1]

Such, then, is the admission of those who defend the gods of the pagans. Yet, though Balbus confesses that some fables pertain to superstition, he regards as true religion what he seems to teach according to the doctrine of the Stoics. He states: 'Not only the philosophers, but also our ancestors, distinguished between superstition and religion. For, those who prayed for entire days and sacrificed that their children

1 *De natura deorum* 2.28.

might outlive them [*superstites*] were called superstitious.' It is plain that, out of reverence for the custom of the state, he would like to praise the religion of the ancients and to distinguish it from superstition, but he cannot find a way to do this. For, if those who prayed for entire days and offered sacrifices were called superstitious by the ancients, should not this name be given also to those who instituted images of the gods differing in age and clothing, and devised geneaologies of gods, consorts and relations? When he blames these practices as superstitious, the guilt attaches to the ancients who instituted and worshiped such images, and also to himself, for, though in his public utterances he tried to keep himself free from superstition, he held that these images must be venerated. But, what he said so eloquently in this discussion he dared not even whisper in public.

Let us Christians give thanks to the Lord our God—not to heaven and earth, as Cicero says, but to Him who made heaven and earth. He it is who, through the most sublime humility of Christ, by the preaching of the Apostles, by the faith of the martyrs who lived by and died for the truth, and by the free service of His followers, uprooted from the hearts of religious men and from the temples of the superstitious those false beliefs which Balbus so haltingly reproved.

Chapter 31

What of Varro himself? We regret that he included stage plays among religious rites, though he did this against his better judgment. When, as a religious man, in many places he encouraged the worship of the gods, does he not admit that he is not of his own conviction following those beliefs, which, he asserts, owed their institution to the Roman state? He does not hesitate to admit that, if he were to found a new state,

he would take his gods and their titles from the order of nature. But, since among the ancients it was the custom to hold as accepted fact the names and surnames as handed down by their ancestors, he says that he felt it a duty to write and study diligently, to the end that the common people might desire rather to worship the gods than to despise them. In these words that astute man clearly shows that he has not revealed all those things which would appear despicable, not only to himself, but even to the common crowd, if they were revealed.

Some might think I imagined this, except that he stated elsewhere, speaking of religious matters, not only that many things were true of which the knowledge was of no advantage to the common people, but also that, even if they were false, it was expedient that the people believe them true. For this reason the Greeks concealed their sacrifices and mysteries by silence and behind walls. Here, he certainly lays bare the schemes of the supposed wise men by whom states and peoples were governed. These falsehoods afford great delight to the evil demons, who take possession of both the deceivers and the deceived, and from whose domination there is no liberation save by the grace of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

This brilliant and learned writer also states that it seems to him that only those who believed God to be the soul governing the world through motion and reason realized what God was. This shows that, even though he had not as yet attained the truth that the true God is not a soul, but the Creator and Maker of the soul, yet, had he been free to go against public opinion, he would have admitted and argued that one God, governing the world through motion and reason, should be worshiped. Then there would remain but

one dispute with him on this matter—namely, that he should say that God was a soul, and not rather the Creator of the soul.

He states, also, that for more than 170 years the ancient Romans worshiped gods without an image. 'If this custom,' he says, 'had endured to the present, the gods would have been reverenced by a purer worship.' In favor of this opinion, he brings forward as witness, among others, the Jewish nation, and he does not hesitate to conclude that passage by saying that those who first set up images of the gods for the people took awe away from their fellow citizens and added to their errors. He wisely considered that the gods can be readily despised when seen in the lifelessness of images. He does not say that they transmitted error, but added to their errors, for he wishes it to be understood that there were errors even without the images. Hence, when he states that only those who believed God to be the soul governing the world had realized what God is, and that he considers that religion would be more purely observed without images, who can fail to see how close he has come to the truth? For, if he could have opposed so inveterate an error, it would have been by his belief in one God by whom the world is governed, and by his contention that this God should be worshiped without an image. Having come so close to the truth in this, he might perhaps have been easily reminded of the mutability of the soul, and thus might have recognized as the true God that immutable Nature which created the soul.

Hence, whatever mockeries of the countless gods such men have set forth in their writings, they have been compelled to such admissions by the hidden will of God, but they made no attempt to persuade others. So, whatever arguments we have drawn from their books we have brought forward to

refute those who refuse to acknowledge from what mighty and malignant power of the demons we have been set free by the precious sacrifice of the holy Blood which was shed for us and by the gift of the Spirit which has been bestowed upon us.

Chapter 32

Varro also states, regarding the genealogies of the gods, that the people were inclined to follow the poets rather than the philosophers. Thus, their ancestors, the ancient Romans, believed in the sex and generation of the gods, and arranged marriages for them. This seems to have been done for no reason save that it was the business of prudent and wise men to deceive the people in matters of religion, and by this deception not only to worship but to imitate the demons, whose chief desire was to deceive. For, just as the demons have no power except over those whom they lead astray by their deception, so also human rulers—not, indeed, the just, but those who resemble the demons—in the name of religion convince the people of the truth of what they themselves know to be false, thus binding them more closely to the state, that they may hold them subject. What weak and ignorant man could escape the combined deceit of rulers and demons?

Chapter 33

Thus, it is God, the Author and Bestower of happiness, and the sole true God who bestows kingdoms both on the good and the bad. Since He is God and not mere chance, He does not do this rashly, but by a divine disposition of events and dates which is unknown to us, but known to Him. He does

this, not as one subject to the course of temporal things, but as Lord and Director. He bestows happiness only on the good. Kings or slaves may have it or lack it, but it is possessed completely only in the life in which no one is a slave. The reason why He gives earthly rule both to the good and to the evil is lest those who are but beginners in His service should mistake these gifts as important. This is the mystery of the Old Testament, in which the New was hidden, that all the gifts and the promises were of this world, yet, the spiritually minded understood even then, though they did not openly make it clear to others, that eternal life was symbolized by temporal gifts and that true beatitude consisted in quite different gifts of God.

Chapter 34

Thus, that men might know that those earthly goods, which alone men desire who can think of nothing else, are at the disposal of the one God and not of the multitude of false gods in whom the Romans believed, He multiplied His people in Egypt from a very few, and delivered them by wonderful miracles. Their women did not have to invoke Lucina that their children might be multiplied, and the tribe increased beyond belief, since God Himself preserved them from the Egyptians who were persecuting them and who wished to destroy all their children. Without the aid of the Goddess Rumina, the children were nursed; without the aid of Cunina, they lay in their cradles; without Educa and Potina, they ate and drank; without the aid of the multitude of childish gods, they were brought up; they were married without the nuptial gods and begot children without the aid of Priapus. Without invoking Neptune, they crossed the sea that opened before them, and their pursuers were

drowned in the returning flood. They dedicated nothing to any goddess Mannia when they received manna from heaven, nor did they worship the Nymphs and Lymphae when water flowed from the cleft rock to quench their thirst. Without foolish rites to Mars and Bellona, they waged war and won victory, not as the gift of some goddess Victoria, but as the gift of God. They had grain without Segetia, oxen without Bubona, honey without Mellona, apples without Pomona; in fact, all that Romans hoped for from their prayers to the false gods, the Jews received more abundantly from the one true God. If they had not sinned against Him, misled by evil curiosity and by magic arts to worship alien gods and idols, and finally to kill Christ, they might have lived happily in that same kingdom, however small it was. They are now scattered over the whole world, by the providence of the one true God, and all images, groves, shrines, and temples of the false gods are overthrown, and the sacrifices forbidden. Yet, this may be seen in their own books that all was foretold by the prophets, lest they might think, when they read the same things in ours, that we have made them up. But now, not to be too prolix in this book, let us turn to what is to follow in the next.

BOOK V

Preface

WE HAVE NOW SEEN, first, that happiness (or the full possession of all that the heart can long for) is not a goddess but a gift of God and, second, that the only God whom men should worship is the One who can make them happy—so that, if Felicity were in fact a goddess, she alone should claim our worship.

We must now turn to consider why God, who can give such gifts as can be shared by men who are not good and, therefore, not happy willed that the Roman Empire should spread so widely and endure so long. Certainly, as I have already said and, if need be, shall repeat, this cannot be attributed to the multitude of false gods whom the Romans worshiped.

Chapter 1

The cause, then, of the greatness of the Roman Empire was neither fortune nor fate. (I am using these words in the sense of those who say or think that fortune, or chance, is what happens without cause or rational explanation, and that fate is what is bound to happen, in spite even of the will of God or of men.) On the contrary, Divine Providence alone explains the establishment of kingdoms among

men. As for those who speak of fate, but mean by fate the will and power of God, they should keep their conception but change their expression. Surely, though, it is best to say at once what one will have to say as soon as one is asked what is meant by fate. Ordinarily, when people hear the word fate they think of nothing but the position of the stars at the moment of one's birth or conception. This position is for some independent of, and for others dependent on, the will of God. As for those who think that the stars determine, independently of God's will, what we are to do and have and suffer, they should be given no hearing by anyone—none, certainly, by those who profess the true religion, and none even by those who worship any kind of gods, however false. For, the conclusion from their way of thinking is that no God at all should be either adored or implored.

For the moment, my argument is not directed against sincere pagans, but only against those who, in defense of what they call gods, attack the Christian religion. However, even those who think the stars are dependent on the will of God (in determining what human beings are to be and have and suffer) do the heavens a great wrong, if they imagine that the stars have their power so communicated to them by God's supreme power that they remain responsible for what they determine. For, how can we suppose—if I may so speak —that the unblemished justice of that brilliant Senate of the Stars could choose to have crimes committed, the like of which no state on earth could command without facing a sentence of suppression at the bar of world opinion?

God is the Lord of both stars and men. But, what kind of rule over men's actions is left to God if men are necessarily determined by the stars?

On the other hand, suppose, as many do, that the stars

have their power from the supreme God, but that, in imposing necessity on men, they merely carry out God's command without any responsibility of their own. In that case, we should have to impute to the will of God what, as we have just seen, would be monstrous to impute even to the stars.

There are some men who prefer to say that the stars rather signify than cause men's fate, that a particular position is like a form of words which causes us to know, but does not cause, what happens in the future. This view was shared by men of no mean learning. However, this is not the way that astrologers usually speak. For example, they do not say: 'Such and such a position of Mars signifies a murder.' What they say is: 'makes a murderer.' Yet, even when we concede that they do not express themselves as they should and that they ought to learn from philosophers the right way to say what they think they have found in the stars, difficulties still remain. For example, they have never been able to explain why twins are so diffierent in what they do and achieve, in their professions and skills, in the honors they receive, and in other aspects of their lives and deaths. In all such matters, twins are often less like each other than like complete strangers; yet, twins are born with practically no interval of time between their births and are conceived in precisely the same moment of a single sexual semination.

Chapter 2

Cicero tells us that the eminent doctor, Hippocrates,[1] once wrote that he suspected two brothers to be twins because they both fell sick, then reached the crisis of the sickness and finally recovered, in each case, at the same time; while

1 Hippocrates of Cos lived between 460 and 357 B.C.

Posidonius,[2] the Stoic, who was greatly interested in astrology, used to insist that such brothers must have been conceived and born with identical horoscopes. Thus, what the doctor attributed to a similar predisposition of bodily health, the philosopher-astrologer ascribed to the power and arrangement of the stars at the moment of conception and birth.

In a matter like this, the medical hypothesis is far more acceptable and obviously more credible, since the parents' condition at the time of conception could easily affect the embryos, and it would be no wonder if the twins should be born with the same kind of health, since they had developed in the same way in their mother's womb. In the same way, they would be nourished with similar food in the same house, and would share the same climate, environment, and water—all of which, according to medical science, can help or hinder health. Moreover, they would be accustomed to the same kind of exercise, and so, having their bodies in the same condition, they would be likely to get sick at the same time and for the same reason.

On the other hand, it is nothing short of impudence to pretend that the movement of the heavens and stars at the moment of conception and birth can explain such similarity in the matter of sickness. One has only to remember how many beings differing in kind, character, and consequent capacities can be conceived and born in any one time and place and under the same conditions of the heavens. I myself have known twins who not only acted differently and traveled in different places, but were likewise quite unlike in health. And, as far as I can see, Hippocrates could easily explain these differences of health in terms of food and exer-

2 Posidonius of Rhodes, a teacher of Cicero, died in 50 B.C.

cise—factors which depend, not on the temper of one's body, but on the choice of one's will.

It would be surprising, indeed, if either Posidonius or any other advocate of siderial influence could find any explanation unless he wanted to play on the ignorance of simple minds. I know they may try to explain differences by appealing to the tiny interval of time between the precise moments of twin's births and, hence, to the precise part of the heavens which marks the hour of birth and which is called the horoscope. But, this is either too little to explain the variety in the wills, actions, character, and fortune of twins, or else it is too much to explain their identity in lowliness or nobility of social class—since the only explanation of class distinctions is supposed to be the hour in which people happen to be born.

And so it is that, if one twin is born so quickly after the other that the same part of the horoscope remains for both, I have a right to expect to find a total likeness, which, as a fact, is never to be found in twins; or, if the delay in the birth of the second twin changes the horoscope, I should expect to find different parents—which, of course, no twins can have.

Chapter 3

It is of no use, therefore, to call in the well-known argument from the potter's wheel, whihc Nigidius[1] is said to have invoked when worried by the problem of twins—and which won him the nickname of 'potter.' He took a potter's wheel

1 Teacher, philosopher, and friend of Cicero. He sided with Pompey in the civil war and, after the Battle of Pharsalia (48 B.C.), retired to Egypt where he died.

and turned it with all his might. Then, while it was spinning around, he made two dots with ink as fast as he could and, to all appearances, in the identical spot. When the wheel came to rest, the two dots he had made were found far apart on the surface of the wheel. 'And so it is with twins,' he said. 'Even though they are born in as quick succession as I made the dots on the wheel, the velocity of the heavens would set the horoscopes far apart. This explains,' he added, 'the very great differences which are recorded in the characters and fortunes of twins.'

Alas! this figment of the imagination is more fragile than the vessels shaped by the spinning of the potter's wheel. For, if there is enough gap in the sky between the horoscopes of twins to explain why one gets the inheritance and the other does not, how can anyone dare to predict, from the horoscopes of those who are not twins, differences like sex, which no one can explain, and ascribe these to the factors operating at the moment of birth?

It is no answer to say that such prognostications relate to non-twins where greater differences in time are in question, whereas the tiny differences in time between births of twins explain only such trivial differences concerning which astrologers are never consulted—for example, when one is to sit, or to walk, or when and what one is to eat. The fact is that such trivialities are not in question when you point out the very many and very great differences in the works and ways of twins.

Chapter 4

To mention only the best known of the twins recorded in the ancient tradition of our fathers, two twins were born at

so short an interval of time that the second had a hold on the foot of the first.[1] Yet, they were so unlike in their lives, character, conduct, and the love their parents bore them that this unlikeness made them enemies one of the other. When I say unlike, I do not mean that one would sit while the other walked, or that one slept while the other was awake, or that one talked while the other kept quiet—for these are the kind of differences that depend on the tiny variations of horoscopes which have to be neglected by those who observe the stars at the moment of birth with a view of consulting the astrologers.

One of our twins led a life of servile toil, while the other served no one. One was loved by his mother, the other was not. One lost the title to primogeniture, which was then so highly esteemed, and the other obtained it. Further, there were immense differences between them in regard to their wives, children, and possessions. If such differences are to be explained by those split seconds between the births of twins which are considered negligible in their horoscopes, why are such matters mentioned when other people's horoscopes are in question? If, on the other hand, predictions are made about matters like these on the assumption that they do not depend on the negligible elements of time but on those moments which can be observed and set down, then what lesson can we draw from the potter's wheel but this, that men have minds as malleable as clay that can be spun around and around without being able to stop to confute the absurdities of the astrologers.

1 Gen. 25.25.

Chapter 5

A good way to refute those who attribute to the stars what depends on a similarity of bodily dispositions is to recall the two boys whom Hippocrates thought to be twins after he had examined medically the simultaneous fluctuations in their health. Considering that they could not be born at the same time, why did not one get sick after the other, in the order of their births, rather than that both should get sick in the same way and at the same time? Why did their sickness and recovery occur simultaneously and not successively, in the order in which they were born—for, certainly, they could not have been born simultaneously?

Or are we to suppose that being born at different times makes no difference in regard to falling sick? If so, why do the astrologers pretend that being born at different times makes a difference in regard to other matters? If they could travel at different times, marry at different times, beget children at different times, and so on, all because they were born at different times, why, for the same reason, could they not get sick at different times? Why should we go to the simultaneous conceptions to find a horoscope in regard to health, when succession in the moments of birth changes the horoscopes in regard to other matters?

On the other hand, if we are to admit that fate in regard to health depends on conception, while fate in regard to other matters depends on the hour of birth, then there ought to be no predictions about health from the inspection of natal stars—since from such an inspection nothing is known about the moment of conception. Or, if predictions are to be made in regard to health, even when no horoscope was taken at conception, on the ground that the moments of birth are sufficient, how could the sickness of either of our twins have

been foretold from the moment of birth, since the fellow twin was fated to have the same hour of sickness, though he had a different moment of birth?

Another difficulty. Granted that there is enough difference in the time of the births of twins to call for different constellations on account of their different horoscopes and, consequently, different ascendant stars[1]—for, here lies the power that controls different fates—why should this be so, when there can be no difference in the times of their conception? Or, if twins conceived at the same moment can have such different fates in regard to the moments of their birth, why cannot others who are born at the same time have equally different fates in regard both to their lives and deaths. After all, the identity of the moment in which they were conceived did not prevent one being born first and the other second. Why, then, if two people are born at the identical time, should anything prevent one from dying first and the other afterwards? If simultaneous conception is compatible with twins having such diverse fortunes in the womb, why should not simultaneous births be compatible with persons having diverse fortunes during their lives on earth? But, if this is so, then all the conclusions (or rather, illusions) of this science go up in smoke.

Let us ask ourselves why it is that those conceived at precisely the same time and under the identical arrangement of the stars have different fates, leading them to be born at different times, yet, persons born of two mothers at precisely the same time and under the same stars may not have different fates leading them of necessity to differences of life and death? Must we answer that when we are conceived we do not yet

1 . . . *diversos omnes cardines.*

have our fixed fates, but must wait until we are born? Then, why do the astrologers claim that, if only they knew the hour of individual's conceptions, their divinations would be much more marvelous? That is why some of them are fond of telling of the philosopher who picked out the precise moment for cohabiting with his wife, so that she might bear him a genius.

So, too, this is why the great astrologer-philosopher, Posidonius, explained the phenomenon of the two twins who became simultaneously sick, by saying that they were both conceived and born at the same time. His point in noting the conception was that it might be argued that they could not be born at precisely the same time, even though it was obvious that they had been conceived together. At all costs, he wanted to link the simultaneous sickness, not to similarity of physical predisposition as the immediate cause, but to the stars.

But, if there is such efficacy in the moment of conception in producing such similarity of fates, like destinies should not be made unlike at birth. Or, if we admit that the destinies of twins are changed because they are born at different times, why should we not admit that the fates had already been changed so that they might be born at different moments. Surely, if the order of being born can change the destiny fixed by conception, then the wills of living persons can change the destiny fixed by birth.

Chapter 6

In any case, how does it happen that of twins conceived at precisely the same moment and under the same fate-fixing constellation, one is a boy and the other a girl? I know two such twins, both alive and vigorous in health. They are as alike in looks as a man and a woman can be, but their lives,

outwardly and inwardly, are altogether different. Some of the differences may be explained by their sex, as that the one is a staff officer in the army and so practically always away from home, while his sister never leaves her own country and not even her own neighborhood. But, the other differences are inexplicable if one believes in fate, and only become intelligible when one thinks in terms of free will and God's grace. The brother is a married man with a large family; the sister, a consecrated virgin, who never married.

Nevertheless, people argue, there is much value in a horoscope. Truly, I have already shown, it has no value at all. Or, if it has any value at all, it is only the horoscope taken at birth—if we may believe the astrologers themselves. But, what of the horoscope at the moment of conception? The point here is that there can be only one moment for the conception of twins; nature itself takes care that no woman who is already pregnant can conceive a second time. Yet, they were born with different horoscopes. Ought we to draw the ridiculous conclusion that, while they were being born, either he was turned into a boy or she into a girl?

Another argument of the astrologers is taken from the fact it is not altogether absurd to say that certain sidereal influences bring about different physical phenomena. Thus, we see the changes in the seasons with the coming and going of the sun, and certain kinds of things grow bigger and smaller with the waxing and waning of the moon. This is the case with sea urchins and mussels and with the spring and neap tides. Why, then, they argue, should not human wills be subject to the position of the stars? But, this attempt to link human acts with the stars prompts us to ask why, in regard to our twins, not even their assumptions in regard to bodies seem to be verified.

For instance, what is more pertinent to the body than sex? Yet, under precisely identical stellar influences, twins of diverse sex can be conceived. Think, then, how silly it is to say or believe that the position of the stars, identical for both brother and sister at the moment of conception, could not prevent her from having the same horoscope but a different sex, while the position of the stars at the times when they were born could make the sister so unlike the brother in the practice of virginity.

Chapter 7

Why, then, should anyone put up with the pretense of the astrologers that fates are fixed to the days we choose for certain actions. Yet, I suppose, the philosopher who picked and chose the moment for cohabiting with his wife acted on the assumption that he was not himself well enough born to have a fine son, but the sort of person likely to beget a scatterbrain. He made for himself a destiny which he lacked, and from that moment something became fated which was not in his stars. A fine bit of folly! A day is chosen for marriage, on the ground, I suppose, that without such a choice the day might be inauspicious and he be unhappily married.

In that case, what becomes of what the stars determined at the moment of his birth? Can a man change, by the choice of a day, a fate already fixed for him? If so, why cannot the fate fixed by the choice of a day be changed by still some other power? And, if human beings alone are subject to the stars and not the rest of the things under the sun, why do men choose the days for planting vines or trees or hedges in one way, and the days for breaking in horses or bringing in the stallion or bull for breeding purposes, and so on, in some other way? If one imagines that the choosing of such days has any

efficacy in these matters, on the ground that everything on earth, living and non-living, is determined by the position of the stars, then let the star-gazers recall the vast number of beings that begin or are born at any one moment of time, yet turn out very differently from one another, and he will realize how ridiculous even to a child such watching of the stars would be. On the other hand, no one is so senseless as to declare that every tree, plant, beast, serpent, bird, fish, and worm has each its own individual moment of coming to be.

Yet, there are people who, often enough, try out the skill of astrologers by bringing to them the horoscopes of dumb animals, the precise moment of whose birth they have noted with care. And, of course, those are ranked above the rest as astrologers who can tell from the inspection of a horoscope that it was that of a beast and not of a man. Some of them make bold to guess what kind of animal is in question, whether it is for wool-bearing or for cart-pulling or for the plough or for the guarding of the house. They try to tell the fortune of dogs, and their predictions are hailed with enthusiastic applause. Thus, people can be mad enough to believe that, when a human being is born, all other births come to such a standstill that not even a fly can be born in that neighborhood at that same moment. For, once they admit that flies can be born; they will be led little by little from flies to camels and elephants.

Such people fail to remark that, on the day chosen for sowing, innumerable seeds fall into the ground at the same moment and grow together and sprout and shoot, and the stalks grow and ripen and turn white at the same time; yet, of the ears which are, so to speak, congerminal, some rot, others are eaten by birds, others are plucked by men. How can

anyone pretend that for each of these different outcomes there must be assigned a different constellation?

You would think that the fatalists would repent of choosing days for dumb creatures, recognizing that they are not subject to the decrees of the sky. In that case, the only creatures left for them to subject to the stars would be the only creatures on earth to whom God has given free wills!

My conclusion from all this is that we are right in believing that when astrologers hit, as they often do, on some correct predictions, this is not the conclusion from some non-existent science of horoscope observation, but is done by the promptings of evil spirits, whose business it is to persuade men, and keep them persuaded, of the false and dangerous opinion that men's destinies are settled by the stars.

Chapter 8

There are some, however, who define fate, not as the arrangement of stars at conception, birth, or other beginning-to-be, but as the total series of causes which brings about all that happens. With these there is no need to enter into a lengthy debate on the use of words, since they attribute to the will and power of God the order and dependence of causes. They are perfectly right in believing that God allows nothing to remain unordered and that He knows all things before they come to pass. He is the Cause of all causes, although not of all choices.

It is easy to prove that by Fate they mean, primarily, the will of the supreme God whose power cannot be prevented from reaching everywhere. It was Annaeus Seneca,[1] I think, who wrote in verse:

1 L. Annaeus Seneca (5 B.C.-A.D. 65), philosopher and teacher of Nero and contemporary of St. Peter and St. Paul in Rome. The verses are found in his *Letters,* No. 107.

Lead where Thou wilt, Father and Lord of the world.
Mine to obey, boldly, without delay.
Should e'er my will resist the right and good,
I'll take in tears whatever ill may come.
Fate leads or drags men—willy-nilly—on.[2]

Obviously, in the last line he means by fate the will of the 'Father and Lord' mentioned in the first line. This will he is ready to obey—to be led willingly or, if need be, dragged reluctantly. The fact is that 'Fate leads or drags men—willy-nilly—on.'

There is the same idea in some lines of Homer which Cicero, when he put them into Latin, took to mean:

Men's minds are led by whatsoever rays
High Jove has cast upon their earthly ways.[3]

Not, of course, that Cicero thought the poet's opinion has any authority in such matters, but he notes that the Stoic philosophers used to cite these lines of Homer when they were defending the power of fate. Thus, there is question here, not of the opinion of the poet, but of the thought of the philosopher. It is clear from these verses, which they used in their discussions, that they meant by fate the supreme divinity, whom they called Jupiter, and from whom all destinies depend.

2 *Ducunt volentem fata, nolentem trahunt.*
3 The original Greek lines are *Odyssey* 18.136,137. Cicero's translation appears in none of his extant works.

Chapter 9

Cicero[1] attempts to refute these Stoics, but he can find no way of doing so without getting rid of divination; this he does by denying all knowledge of what is future. He makes every effort to prove that there can be no foreknowledge, whether in God or in man, and, therefore, no possibility of prediction. Thus, he denies the foreknowledge of God and seeks to get rid even of the clearest cases of prophecy by baseless arguments and by limiting himself to such oracles as are easy to refute. The fact is that he does not confute even these. However, he makes a masterly refutation of the conjectures of the astrologers—for the simple reason that their mutual contradictions are their best refutation.

Nevertheless, for all their sidereal fates, the astrologers are nearer the truth than Cicero with his denial of all knowledge of the future, for it is plain nonsense for a man to admit that God exists and then to deny that He can know the future. Cicero realized this, but was rash enough to fulfill the words of the Scripture: 'The fool has said in his heart: There is no God.'[2] It is true, he does not do this in his own name. This, he knew, was too risky. Instead, in his work *On the Nature of the Gods* he lets Cotta[3] play the role, in arguing against the Stoics, of denying the existence of any divine nature. Cicero chose to give his vote to Lucilius Balbus,[4] who defended the Stoic position, but, in his work *On Divination,* Cicero openly and in his own name attacks all foreknowledge of the future.

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1 Cicero, *De divinatione,* especially Book II.
2 Ps. 13 1.
3 C. Aurelius Cotta, consul in 75 B C , is one of the speakers in both *De oratore* and *De natura deorum.* He represents a form of Academic skepticism in philosophy.
4 Quintus Lucilius Balbus represents Stoic philosophy in the dialogue.

It is true, he seems to do this only to save free will and to reject the necessity of fate. His point is that, once any knowledge of the future is admitted, it is logically impossible to deny fate.

But, be these tortuous strifes and disputations of the philosophers what they will, we who profess belief in the supreme and true God confess, likewise, His will, His supreme power, His foreknowledge. Nor are we dismayed by the difficulty that what we choose to do freely is done of necessity, because He whose foreknowledge cannot be deceived foreknew that we would choose to do it. This was the fear that made Cicero oppose foreknowledge. It was this fear, too, that led the Stoics to admit that not everything happened of necessity, even though they held that everything happens by fate.

Let us examine, then, this fear of foreknowledge which led Cicero to attempt to deny it in his detestable disputation. He argues thus. If all that is future is foreknown, each event will occur in the order in which it is foreknown that it will occur. But, if things happen in this order, the order of things is known for certain in the mind of God who foreknows them. But, if the order of events is known for certain, then the order of causes is known for certain—since nothing can happen without a preceding efficient cause. If, however, the order of causes, by which all that happens is known for certain, then, he says, all that happens happens by fate. But, if this is so, nothing is left to our own power and, therefore, there is no choice in our will. But, he goes on, once we admit this, all human life becomes topsy-turvy; laws are made in vain; there is no point in reproaches or in praise, in scolding or in exhortation; there is no ground in justice for rewarding the good or punishing the wicked.

Thus, his motive for rejecting foreknowledge of the future

was to avoid unworthy, absurd and dangerous implications for human society. He narrows down the choices of a devout mind to one or other of these alternatives: *either* the power of choice *or* foreknowledge. It seemed to him impossible that both could exist. If one stands, the other falls. If we choose foreknowledge, we lose free choice; if we choose free choice, we must lose knowledge of the future.

Magnanimous and learned as he was, and with no thought but to save human nature as best he could, Cicero made his choice. He chose free choice. To make it certain, he denied foreknowledge. Thus, to make men free, he made them give up God.

A man of faith wants both. He professes both and with a devout faith he holds both firmly. But how, one asks? For, if there is foreknowledge of the future, logical step follows logical step until we reach a point where nothing is left in the will. On the other hand, if we start from power in the will, the steps lead in the opposite direction until we come to the conclusion that foreknowledge is non-existent. This is how the reverse argument runs. If there is free choice, not all is fixed by fate. If not all is fixed by fate, there is no certain order of all causes. If there is no certain order of causes, there is no certain order of events known in the mind of God, since events cannot happen without preceding and efficient causes. If the order of events is not certain in the foreknowledge of God, not all things happen as He foresaw they would happen. But, if all does not happen as He foresaw it would happen, then, Cicero argues, in God there is no foreknowledge of all that is to happen.

Our stand against such bold and impious attacks on God is to say that God knows all things before they happen; yet, we act by choice in all those things where we feel and know

that we cannot act otherwise than willingly. And yet, so far from saying that everything happens by fate, we say that nothing happens by fate—for the simple reason that the word 'fate' means nothing. The word means nothing, since the only reality in the mind of those who use the word—namely, the arrangement of the stars at the moment of conception or birth —is, as we show, pure illusion.

We do not deny, of course, an order of causes in which the will of God is all-powerful. On the other hand, we do not give this order the name fate, except in a sense in which the word 'fate' is derived from *fari*, to speak. For, of course, we cannot reject what is written in Holy Scripture: 'God hath spoken once, these two things have I heard, that power belongeth to God and mercy to Thee, O Lord, for Thou wilt render to everyone according to his works.'[5] The 'once' here means 'once and for all.' God spoke once and for all because He knows unalterably all that is to be, all that He is to do. In this way, we might use the word 'fate' to mean what God has 'spoken' [*fatum*], except that the meaning of the word has already taken a direction in which we do not want men's minds to move.

However, our main point is that, from the fact that to God the order of all causes is certain, there is no logical deduction that there is no power in the choice of our will. The fact is that our choices fall within the order of the causes which is known for certain to God and is contained in His foreknowledge—for, human choices are the causes of human acts. It follows that He who foreknew the causes of all things could not be unaware that our choices were among those causes which were foreknown as the causes of our acts.

5 Ps. 61.12.

In this matter it is easy enough to refute Cicero by his own admission, namely, that nothing happens without a preceding efficient cause. It does not help him to admit that nothing happens without a cause and then to argue that not every cause is fated, since some causes are either fortuitous or natural or voluntary. He admits that nothing happens without a preceding cause; that is enough to refute him.

As for the causes which are called fortuitous—hence, the name of fortune—we do not say they are unreal. We say they are latent, in the sense that they are hidden in the will either of the true God or one of His spirits. And, of course, still less do we dissociate from the will of Him who is the Author and Builder of all nature, the causes which Cicero calls 'natural.' There remain the voluntary causes. They are the choices of God or of angels or of men or of certain animals—if, indeed we may call 'choices' the instinctive movements of irrational animals by which they seek or avoid what is good or bad for their nature. By the choices of angels I mean those of the good ones we call the angels of God or of the wicked ones we call demons or the angels of the Devil. So of men, there are the choices of good men and of bad men.

From this we conclude that the only efficient causes of all things are voluntary causes, that is to say, causes of the same nature as the spirit or breath of life. Of course, the air or wind can be said to breathe;[6] but, being a body, it is not the breath or spirit of life. The Spirit of Life, which gives life to all and is the Creator of all matter and of every created spirit is God, a Spirit, indeed, but uncreated. In His will is the supreme power which helps the good choices of created

6 *Nam et aer iste seu ventus dicitur spiritus.*

spirits, judges the evil ones, and orders all of them, giving powers to some and not to others.

As He is the Creator of all natures, so is He the giver of all powers—though He is not the maker of all choices.[7] Evil choices are not from Him, for they are contrary to the nature which is from Him. Thus, bodies are subject to wills. Some bodies are subject to our wills—to the wills of all mortal animals, but especially those of men rather than of beasts. Some bodies are subject to the wills of angels. And absolutely all bodies are subject to the will of God; as, indeed, are all wills, too, since they have no power save what He gave them.

Thus, God is the Cause of all things—a cause that makes but is not made. Other causes make, but they are themselves made—for example, all created spirits and, especially, rational spirits. Material causes which are rather passive than active are not to be included among efficient causes, for their power is limited to what the wills of spirits work through them.

It does not follow, therefore, that the order of causes, known for certain though it is in the foreknowing mind of God, brings it about that there is no power in our will, since our choices themselves have an important place in the order of causes.

And so, let Cicero argue with those who hold that this order of causes is fixed by fate, or, rather, is the reality they call fate. Our main objection is to the word fate, which is usually given a false sense. As for Cicero, we object to him even more than the Stoics do when he denies that the order of all causes is fixed and clearly known in the foreknowledge

7 . . . *omnium potestatum dator, non voluntatum.*

of God. Cicero must either deny that God exists—and this, in fact, is what he attempts to do in the name of Cotta in his work *On the Nature of the Gods*—or else, if he admits God's existence while denying His foreknowledge, what he says amounts to nothing more than what 'the fool hath said in his heart: There is no God.' The fact is that one who does not foreknow the whole of the future is most certainly not God.

Our conclusion is that our wills have power to do all that God wanted them to do and foresaw they could do. Their power, such as it is, is a real power. What they are to do they themselves will most certainly do, because God foresaw both that they could do it and that they would do it and His knowledge cannot be mistaken. Thus, if I wanted to use the word 'fate' for anything at all, I should prefer to say that 'fate' is the action of a weak person, while 'choice' is the act of the stronger man who holds the weak man in his power, rather than to admit that the choice of our will is taken away by that order of causes which the Stoics arbitrarily call fate.

Chapter 10

It follows that we need not be afraid of that necessity which frightened the Stoics into distinguishing various kinds of causes. They sought to free certain causes from necessity while others were subject to it. Among the causes which they wanted free from necessity they reckoned our wills. Obviously, wills could not be free if subject to necessity.

Now, if by necessity we mean one that is in no way in our power, but which has its way even when our will is opposed to it, as is the case with the necessity to die, then, our choices of living well or ill obviously are not subject to this kind of necessity. The fact is that we do many things which we would most certainly not do if we did not choose to do them. The

most obvious case is our willing itself. For, if we will, there is an act of willing; there is none if we do not want one. We would certainly not make a choice if we did not choose to make it. On the other hand, if we take necessity to mean that in virtue of which something must be so and so or must happen in such and such a way, I do not see that we should be afraid of such necessity taking away our freedom of will. We do not put the life of God and the foreknowledge of God under any necessity when we say that God *must* live an eternal life and *must* know all things. Neither do we lessen His power when we say He cannot die or be deceived. This is the kind of inability which, if removed, would make God less powerful than He is. God is rightly called omnipotent, even though He is unable to die and be deceived. We call Him omnipotent because He does whatever He wills to do and suffers nothing that He does not will to suffer. He would not, of course, be omnipotent, if He had to suffer anything against His will. It is precisely because He is omnipotent that for Him some things are impossible.

So with us, when we say we *must* choose freely when we choose at all, what we say is true; yet, we do not subject free choice to any necessity which destroys our liberty. Our choices, therefore, are our own, and they effect, whenever we choose to act, something that would not happen if we had not chosen. Even when a person suffers against his will from the will of others, there is a voluntary act—not, indeed, of the person who suffers. However, a human will prevails—although the power which permits this is God's. (For, wherever there is a mere will without power to carry out what it chooses, it would be impeded by a stronger will. Even so, there would be no will in such a condition unless there were a will, and not merely the will of another but the will of the

one choosing, even though he is unable to carry out his choice.) Therefore, whatever a man has to suffer against his will is not to be attributed to the choices of man or of angels or of any created spirit, but to His choice who gives to wills whatever power they have.

It does not follow, therefore, that there is no power in our will because God foreknew what was to be the choice in our will. For, He who had this foreknowledge had some foreknowledge. Furthermore, if He who foresaw what was to be in our will foresaw, not nothing, but something, it follows that there is a power in our will, even though He foresaw it.

The conclusion is that we are by no means under compulsion to abandon free choice in favor of divine foreknowledge, nor need we deny—God forbid!—that God knows the future, as a condition for holding free choice. We accept both. As Christians and philosophers, we profess both—foreknowledge, as a part of our faith; free choice, as a condition of responsible living. It is hard to live right if one's faith in God is wrong.

Far be it from us, then, to deny, in the interest of our freedom, the foreknowledge of God by whose power we are—or are to be—free. It follows, too, that laws are not in vain, nor scoldings and encouragements, nor praise and blame. He foresaw that such things should be. Such things have as much value as He foresaw they would have. So, too, prayers are useful in obtaining these favors which He foresaw He would bestow on those who should pray for them. There was justice in instituting rewards and punishments for good and wicked deeds. For, no one sins because God foreknew that he would sin. In fact, the very reason why a man is undoubtedly responsible for his own sin, when he sins, is because He whose foreknowledge cannot be deceived foresaw, not the man's fate or fortune or what not, but that the man himself would be

responsible for his own sin. No man sins unless it is his choice to sin; and his choice not to sin, that, too, God foresaw.

Chapter 11

This supreme and true God—with His Word and Holy Spirit which are one with Him—this one omnipotent God is the creator and maker of every soul and of every body. All who find their joy in truth and not in mere shadows derive their happiness from Him. He made man a rational animal, composed of soul and body. He permitted man to sin—but not with impunity—and He pursued him with His mercy. He gave men—both good and bad—their being, as He gave being to the rocks. He let men share generative life in common with the trees, and the life of the senses with the beasts of the fields, but the life of intelligence only with the angels. God is the Author of all measure, form, and order; of all size, number and weight.[1] He is the source of every nature, of whatever sort or condition; of the seed of every form and the form of every seed and the movement of both seeds and forms. He gave to all flesh its beginning, beauty, health, and power of reproduction; the arrangement of its members and the general well-being of a balanced whole. To His irrational creatures He gave memory, perception, and appetite, but to His rational creatures He added a mind with intelligence and will.

He left no part of this creation without its appropriate peace, for in the last and least of all His living things the very entrails are wonderfully ordered—not to mention the beauty of birds' wings, and the flowers of the fields and the leaves of trees. And above the beauty of sky and earth is that of angels and of man. How, then, can anyone believe that it was the

1 . . . *a quo est omnis modus, omnis species, omnis ordo; a quo est mensura, numerus, pondus.*

will of God to exempt from the laws of His providence the rise and fall of political societies?

Chapter 12

We may now turn to consider the virtues of the Romans and to ask why the true God, in whose hands are all the kingdoms of the earth, deigned to help them in building up their empire. It was with this question in mind that I wrote both the preceding Books, dealing with the impotence of the gods whom the Romans felt it a duty to worship in such foolish ways, and likewise the earlier chapters of the present Book. I had to dispose of the question of fate. Otherwise, anyone forced to give up the idea that the worship of the pagan gods could help, in the rise and progress of the Roman Empire, might fall back on some kind of destiny rather than attribute it to the all-powerful will of the supreme God.

As far as one can learn from their recorded history, the earliest and most primitive Romans, like all other peoples with the single exception of the Hebrews, worshiped false gods and offered sacrifices, not to God, but to demons. Yet, we read, they were 'avid for praise, liberal with money, pursuers of high glory and hard-won wealth.'[1] Glory was their most ardent love. They lived for honor, and for it they did not hesitate to die. This single measureless ambition crushed their lesser greeds. It was their glory to conquer and control others, and a dishonor for their fatherland not to be free. Their first ambition was to make it free; their next, to make it a master of the world.

Hence, refusing to endure kingly domination, 'they appointed two rulers to govern for one year at a time';[2] and they

1 Sallust, *Catilina* 7.
2 *Ibid.* 6.

called them consuls rather than kings or lords—meaning men who advised rather than reigned or dominated over them. And although, as a matter of fact, a king merely means a man who can rule and the word kingdom is derived from king, they looked on the pomp of royalty as a pride of domination rather than as a part of the discipline of a ruler or the benevolence of a counselor.

Hence, they drove out King Tarquinius and instituted consuls. The result was, to quote from Sallust's flattering account of the Romans, that 'with freedom won, the city grew at an incredible rate, because of their passionate greed for glory.'[3] Thus, passionate greed for praise and glory worked many wonders worthy, according to human standards, of praise and honor.

The same Sallust praises the great and outstanding men of his own age, Marcus Cato and Gaius Caesar.[4] He observes that, for a long period, the republic had no outstanding hero, but that, in his own lifetime, these two were highly distinguished in their careers, though different in their characters. His eulogy of Caesar pictures a man dreaming of a great empire, an army, a new war in which his prowess could be proved. Thus, the hearts of men of great worth were filled with the longing that the goddess of war should rush poor peoples into strife and goad them into her bloody scourge—for no purpose but to have a stage for military valor. Such was the fruit of this passionate greed for praise and glory.

Thus, the achievements of the Romans had two sources: first, the love of liberty; second, the desire for domination, praise, and glory. Their great poet, Virgil, bears witness to this double passion in his lines:

3 *Ibid.* 7.
4 Cato of Utica and Julius Caesar.

Porsenna bade them take Tarquinius back
Or face the siege his serried host maintained.
But Romans rushed to arms; and freedom reigned.[5]

So, in those days, it was considered virtue either to live in freedom or to die in war. The trouble was that, once they were free, such a passion for glory took hold of them that liberty without a lust for domination seemed too little for them. Greatness was now reckoned by what the poet puts into the mouth of Jove:

Nay, Juno's rage,
That fills with fear the earth and sea and skies,
Will change to better counsel and to wise
Designs. She will cherish Rome in peace
And war and, as the ages pass, in Greece
And Crete and in the East and West, deploy
The domination of the race of Troy.[6]

Obviously, what the poet puts into the mouth of Jove as a prophecy, Virgil himself had already known and seen as a fact of history. But, what I wanted to show, in citing these verses, was that the Romans ranked domination so close to liberty that it shared in the same high praise.

This explains how the same poet, Virgil, could prefer the Roman arts of reigning and ruling, of conquest and control, to the softer arts of other peoples. Thus, he wrote:

5 *Aeneid* 8.646-648.
6 *Ibid.* 1.379-285.

Let others breathe their bronzes into life
And make their marbles flush like human faces,
Astonish judges in the courts of law
And count the stars in all the skiey places . . .
O Rome, your art, remember, is to rule:
To teach the humbler, tame the prouder, races.[7]

The ancient Romans were all the more skillful in the arts of war because they were so little addicted to indulgence and the enervation of mind and body that goes with the greed for making money and the consequent corruption of morals, the robbing of less-privileged citizens to pay the producers of immoral shows. However, in the time when Sallust wrote and Virgil sang, this corruption of morals was already everywhere apparent. Romans now sought for honors and fame, not by the older ways, but by the crooked paths of chicanery and guile. This explains why Sallust writes: 'At first, ambition more than greed moved men's hearts, and, vice as it was, ambition was more of a virtue than greed. Good and bad men are alike in seeking glory, honor, and political control; but, the former take the right road while the latter, knowing no better ways, use chicanery and guile.'[8]

The better way to reach honor, glory, and dominion is by virtue, not by conniving and lying. A good citizen seeks rewards as a bad one does, but the good citizen takes the right way. This way is his virtue, and by this he seeks the goal of glory, honor and dominion. That this was the way of the ancient Romans we may see from the two temples which they

7 *Ibid.* 6.847-853.
8 *Catilina* 11.

built very close together, the temples of Virtue and Honor—the gifts of God being mistaken for gods. From this, it is easy enough to see that they reckoned honor as the goal of virtue and that even good men thought of honor as their reward. As for the wicked who had no virtue, they sought for honor by the evil means of guile and fraud.

Cato is rightly praised more than Caesar, for, as Sallust says of him: 'The less he sought for glory the more it followed him.'[9] However, the only kind of glory they were greedy for was merely the reputation of a good name among men; whereas, virtue rests not on others' judgments but on the witness of one's own conscience, and, therefore, is better than a good name. Hence, the Apostle says: 'For our glory is this, the testimony of our conscience';[10] and in another place: 'But let everyone prove his own work, and so he shall have glory in himself only, and not in another.'[11] Therefore, virtue should not pursue the glory, honor, and dominion which they sought, even though their good men sought to reach these ends by good means, but these things should follow virtue. There is no true virtue save that which pursues the end which is man's true good. It follows, therefore, that Cato should not have sought the honors he sought, but his city should have given them to him because of his virtue and without his asking for them.

Granted, then, that there were two men of outstanding virtue in Sallust's time, Caesar and Cato, the virtue of Cato seems far nearer to true virtue than Caesar's. It is well, therefore, to go to Cato for an opinion on the state of the city as it was in his day and as it had been in the past. 'Do not think,'

9 *Ibid.* 54.
10 2 Cor. 1.12.
11 Gal. 6.4.

he says, 'that our fathers made our city great by arms. Had this been the case, we would have a far finer city than we have, for we have more citizens and more allies, more arms and horse than they. They had other means to make them great, which we lack: industry at home and justice in their rule abroad, a spirit of freedom in political discussion unstained by wickedness or lust. In place of these virtues, we have lust and greed, public need and private opulence; we praise wealth, but practice sloth; we treat the good and bad alike; we rob virtue to reward ambition. No wonder—with each one consulting his own interest, thinking only of lust at home and of fortune or favors in public life—that the republic is helpless to defend itself.'[12]

In reading words like these of Cato (or, rather, of Sallust), it is easy to imagine that, in the good old days, all or most of the Romans were like those who are here praised. It was not so. How else could there be any truth in what I cited from Sallust in my second Book. He speaks of oppression of the weak by the strong, and the consequent breaking away of the people from their leaders, and other domestic troubles, from the very beginning. He says that equitable and moderate laws prevailed only so long after the expulsion of the Kings as fear of Tarquinius lasted, and until the fierce war with the Etruscans, which had begun because of him, came to an end.

As soon as the crisis was over, the Senators began to lord it over the people, to treat them as harshly as kings had done, to drive them from the common lands, and to monopolize the government to the exclusion of everyone else. Dissensions continued between the leaders in power and the recalcitrant

12 *Catilina* 52.

people until the Second Punic War. Only then did fear return to temper the trouble by a more serious preoccupation and reduce the angry spirits to a semblance of civic concord.

However, the administration continued to be directed by a small group of relatively good men, through whose foresight the evils of the times were tempered and made sufficiently tolerable for the general welfare to continue to increase. This is Sallust's explanation. After collecting all he could, from reading and tradition, concerning the achievements of the Roman people in peace and war, on sea and land, he made a point of seeking to explain such continued success. He realized that, again and again, with a handful of men, the Romans had faced vast armies of their enemies and with a few troops waged wars with well-provided kings. His conclusion, after mature reflection, so he tells us, is that only the exceptional ability of a few citizens brought it about that a people so few and poor could defeat others so numerous and rich. 'But,' Sallust goes on to say, 'once the city had fallen a victim to luxury and laziness, the Republic by its very size ministered to the vices of the rulers and magistrates.'[13] Thus, what Cato really praises is the virtue of the few who sought for glory, honor, and dominion in the right way. It was virtue that explained the Roman industry, which, according to Cato, filled the public coffers while the private citizens remained poor. When, in turn, corruption of morals set in, vice had the opposite effect: it made for public need and private opulence.

Chapter 13

And so it was that, after many monarchies had been famous in the East, God willed that there should be an empire in the

13 *Ibid.* 53.

West. It was to be later in time, but greater in size and importance. It was God's way of checking the wickedness of many nations. He put this task in the hands of men whose glory it was to work for the welfare of their own nation in return for honor, praise, and glory. They were men ready to sacrifice private interest to the common good; in the name of their single weakness, love of glory, they conquered greed for gold and many other passions.

Because, of course, rightly considered, the love of glory is a sin, as even the poet Horace recognized:

> The greed of glory? 'Tis a cancerous vice.
> The antidote? You read my volume thrice.[1]

So, too, in his *Odes,* Horace hoped to tame the lust for domination with lines like these: Conquer your greed and then a wider kingdom falls to your lot than if you warred as far as Libyan deserts, conquering all peoples Punic or Spanish.[2]

This much is true. It is not given to all men to tame their shameful lusts by Christian faith, by the grace of the Holy Spirit and out of love of Everlasting Beauty, but they do the best they can out of love of human praise and glory. If they are not great saints, they are, at least, less sinful than the unrestrained. They may be less than saints but, at least, they are lovelier than the viler sinners. This was clear enough to Cicero when he wrote, in his work *On the Commonwealth,* the section on the education of the ruler of a city. He says that the future ruler should be nourished with glory, and he goes on

1 Horace, *Epistulae* 1.1.36,37.
2 *Odes* 2,2.9-12.

to recall that the ancient Romans achieved astonishingly splendid results out of a motive of glory.[3]

Thus the Romans did nothing to repress the sin of seeking glory. On the contrary, they thought it useful for the commonweal and, therefore, to be fostered and encouraged. Even in his philosophical works, Cicero does nothing to disguise this pernicious disease, but rather proclaims it openly. Even when he is treating of those studies which are to be pursued for what is truly good and not merely for the sake of the passing breath of human praise, he sets forth this statement as a general principle: 'The arts are fed by honor and studies are stimulated by praise, while nothing is attempted where no men give approval.'[4]

Chapter 14

What is certain is that it is better to resist this passion than to yield to it. For, the freer a man is from this vice, the more like he is to God. Even though the lust for glory is never wholly eradicated from the heart in this life and the temptation assails men of advanced virtue, it should at least be tempered by our love of justice, so that, should we find among the things which are unattempted, because 'no man give approval,' something that is good or right, human respect should be ashamed and should yield to the love of truth.

It is because this weakness is an enemy of Christian faith, in so far as the heart is more moved by greed for glory than by the fear or love of God, that our Lord asked: 'How can you believe, who receive glory one from another: and the glory

3 *De re publica* 5.75.

4 *Tusculan Disputations* 1.2.4.

which is from God alone, you do not seek?'[1] In the same way, the Evangelist says of those who believed in Him but were ashamed to confess Him openly: 'They loved the glory of men more than the glory of God.'[2]

It was different with the Apostles. They were once preaching Christ's Name in a place where it was not merely not given approval—to recall Cicero's words about nothing being 'attempted where no men give approval'—but was held in the highest detestataion. Keeping in mind what they had been told by the Teacher and Healer of their minds and souls, 'He that will deny me before men, I will also deny him before my Father who is in heaven,' or 'before the angels of God,'[3] they were not deterred, in spite of curses and insults, fierce persecution and cruel penalties, from preaching the salvation of the world in the face of the world's scorn and hostility.

Their holy words and works and way of life, which somehow broke the opposition of the hardest hearts and filled them with the peace of righteousness, won for them an immense glory in the Church of Christ. They took no complacency in this, as though it were the purpose of their virtue, but, on the contrary, referred their glory to the glory of God, by whose grace they were able to do what they did. And, with the flame of grace in their own souls, they fired those for whom they worked with the flame of the love of the same God who made the Apostles what they were.

For, their Master had taught them not to pursue virtue for the sake of human glory: 'Take heed that you do not your justice before men, to be seen by them: otherwise you shall

1 John 5.44.
2 John 12.43.
3 Matt. 10.33; Luke 12.9.

not have a reward of your Father who is in heaven.'[4] On the other hand, He did not want them so to misunderstand these words as to fear to please men and so, by concealing their virtue, to help them less. Hence, He pointed out to them the motive they should have in making themselves known to the world. 'So let your light shine before men,' He told them, 'that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven.'[5] Not, notice, 'that you may be seen by them,' not, that is, with the intention that they may be converted to you—since you by yourselves are nothing—but 'that they may glorify your Father who is in heaven,' so that, by being converted to Him, they become as you are.

After the Apostles came the martyrs—men greater than Scaevola or the Curtii or Decii, not because of what they did to themselves, but because a vast multitude of them with true piety and, therefore, with true virtue endured what other men made them suffer. It was different with pagan heroes. They were citizens of the earthly city, of a kingdom not in heaven but on earth, and the only purpose of all their duties was the city's temporal security. They knew nothing of everlasting life, but only of a succession of living and dying mortals. What other glory could they love but the fame by which, when they were dead, they might seem to live on the lips of those who praised them?

Chapter 15

For these pagan heroes there was not to be the divine grace of everlasting life along with His holy angels in His heavenly City, for the only road to this Society of the Blessed

4 Matt. 6.1.
5 Matt. 5.16.

is true piety, that is, that religious service or *latreía* (to use the Greek word) which is offered to the One true God. On the other hand, if God did not grant them at least the temporal glory of a splendid Empire, there would have been no reward for the praiseworthy efforts or virtues by which they strove to attain that glory. When our Lord said: 'Amen I say to you they have received their reward,'[1] He had in mind those who do what seems to be good in order to be glorified by men.

After all, the pagans subordinated their private property to the common welfare, that is, to the republic and the public treasury. They resisted the temptation to avarice. They gave their counsel freely in the councils of the state. They indulged in neither public crime nor private passion. They thought they were on the right road when they strove, by all these means, for honors, rule, and glory. Honor has come to them from almost all peoples. The rule of their laws has been imposed on many peoples. And in our day, in literature and in history, glory has been given them by almost everyone. They have no right to complain of the justice of the true and supreme God. 'They have received their reward.'

Chapter 16

The reward of the saints is altogether different. They were men who, while on earth, suffered reproaches for the City of God which is so much hated by the lovers of this world. That City is eternal. There, no one is born because no one dies. There, there reigns that true and perfect happiness which is not a goddess, but a gift of god—toward whose beauty we can but sigh in our pilgrimage on earth, though we hold the

1 Matt. 6.2,5.

pledge of it by faith. In that City, the sun does not 'rise upon the good and bad'[1] for the Sun of Justice cherishes the good alone. There, where the Truth is a treasure shared by all, there is no need to pinch the poor to fill the coffers of the state.

It was, then, not only to reward the Roman heroes with human glory that the Roman Empire spread. It had a purpose for the citizens of the Eternal City during their pilgrimage on earth. Meditating long and seriously on those great examples, they could understand what love of their Heavenly Fatherland should be inspired by everlasting life, since a fatherland on earth has been so much loved by citizens inspired by human glory.

Chapter 17

When it is considered how short is the span of human life, does it really matter to a man whose days are numbered what government he must obey, so long as he is not compelled to act against God or his conscience? And, what injury did the Romans do to those they conquered, save that they imposed their laws by means of war and slaughter? It is true, they would have triumphed better by compact than by conquest. But then they would have had less glory. The fact is that the Romans lived under the identical laws they imposed on others. And all could have been arranged without the help of Mars, Bellona, and Victoria. But, no war, no victor; and that would have put the Romans on the same level with other peoples. This would have been the case, especially, if the Romans had done earlier what they were kind and gracious enough to do later, namely, to make the privilege of a few

1 Matt. 5.45.

a fellowship of all, and to call all who belonged to the Roman Empire citizens of Rome. The only exception to this was the lower class of people who had no property of their own. These lived at the public expense. They were well off in the sense that the food that might have been taken from them by their conquerors was guaranteed to them by the state and provided by good administrators.

So far as I can see, it makes no difference at all to political security or public order to maintain the purely human distinction between conquerors and conquered peoples. It adds nothing to the state but empty pomp—fit reward for those who wage fierce battles out of lust for human glory. Do not the Romans pay taxes for their lands as others do? Are they more free to learn than others are? Are there not many Senators in foreign lands who do not even know what Rome looks like. When all the boasting is over, what is any man but just another man? And, even though a crooked world came to admit that men should be honored only according to merit, even human honor would be of no great value. It is smoke that weighs nothing.

Yet, in this matter, too, let us turn to our profit the goodness of God, our Lord. Let us reflect what good things they despised, what suffering they sustained, what passions they subdued for human glory—the sole reward such marvelous virtues merited. Let it help us to suppress our pride when we think of the difference between their city and ours and to reflect how little we can claim to have done if, to gain our City, we do a little good or endure certain ills, when they have done and suffered so much for the sake of the earthly city which is already theirs. Our City is as different from theirs as heaven from earth, as everlasting life from passing pleasure, as solid glory from empty praise, as the company of angels

from the companionship of mortals, as the Light of Him who made the sun and moon is brighter than the light of sun and moon. We can learn from this, too, that the remission of sins which makes us citizens of the Eternal City was faintly adumbrated when Romulus gathered the first citizens of his city by providing a sanctuary and immunity for a multitude of criminals.

Chapter 18

If, for the sake of this temporal and earthly city, Brutus[1] could have his own sons put to death—a sacrifice which the eternal and heavenly City compels none of us to make—why should we think much of giving up all the pleasures, however enjoyable, of this world? It is surely more difficult to put one's own sons to death than to give to the poor, or to lose altogether, at the call of faith or justice, what one has earned and hoped to save for one's children. The riches of this earth can make neither us nor our children happy, if they are to be lost while we are alive or, after we are dead, are to pass to people we do not know or, perhaps, dislike. Only God can make us happy, for He is the true riches of our souls. As for Brutus, who killed his sons, we know how unhappy he was from the poet who has praised him:

> What, though 'twas Freedom called for filicide?
> And what, though after ages gave him glory?
> Poor Brutus was unhappy till he died.[2]

However, the next line offers some consolation: 'Yet, love for

1 Cf. Book III, Ch. 16.
2 *Aeneid* 6.820-822.

Rome and glory made him strong.' These are the two motives —freedom and the greed for fame—that made the Romans so marvelously successful. If, then, fathers could slay their sons for the sake of fame and freedom among mortal men, what wonder if, for the sake of true freedom, we do not kill them but rather add the poor of Christ to the number of our sons? This is a freedom which makes us free from servitude to sin and death and the Devil. And we are moved, not by a passion for men's praise, but by a charity that seeks to free men, not from a king like Tarquinius, but from devils and the Prince of demons.

Consider, too, that other Roman leader, Torquatus.[3] He killed his son, not for being the enemy of his country, but its friend. Only, the son acted against the authority of his state in acting against the command of the general, his father, and allowing his youthful ardor to be provoked into an attack on the enemy. The attack was successful, but he was put to death lest his example of disobedience should do more harm than the glory of his victory, good. Those, then, who despise earthly goods which are far less dear to them than children and do this under the laws of their eternal home, have little right to boast.

Again, take Furius Camillus.[4] If he could, first, save his country from the yoke of its bitter enemies, the Veientes, then find himself condemned by rival countrymen, and yet once more save his ungrateful nation from the Gauls because he knew no better place where he could live in glory, why need we make a hero of a Christian who has suffered some grave wrong from enemies within the Church, and then does not

3 Cf. Book I, Ch. 23.
4 Cf. Book II, Ch. 17.

pass over to its enemies the heretics, or does not start some heresy of his own, but defends the Church from the dangerous dogmas of the heretics? After all, there is only one Church where one can gain eternal life, whatever heresy may offer in the way of human glory.

Remember Mucius,[5] who tried to kill Porsenna when he was threatening to conquer Rome, and by mistake killed another? Determined to bring about a peace, there before the eyes of Porsenna, he held his hand in a flame of an altar fire, saying that many others like him had vowed Porsenna's death. And Porsenna, frightened by the fortitude and determination of men like that, at once put an end to the war and declared peace. Why, then, should a Christian think he has fully merited the Kingdom of Heaven if for its sake he has willingly thrust one of his hands in the fire, or even if he has lost his whole body in the flames as a victim of persecution?

Or take Curtius.[6] He spurred his horse and plunged into a great chasm in the earth, in obedience to an oracle of the gods commanding that the Romans should cast into the chasm the most precious thing they had. No Roman could believe that they had anything more precious than their armed warriors, and it followed that, to obey the gods, an armed warrior had to meet his death by plunging into the chasm. Why, then, must a Christian say he has done something great for the Eternal City, when he has not even cast himself into such a death but has merely suffered it at the hands of some enemy of the faith? After all, better than any oracle, he has the assurance of his Lord who is King of his Country: 'Fear ye

5 Cf. Book IV, Ch. 20.
6 *Ibid.*

not them that kill the body, and are not able to kill the soul.'[7]

The Decii[8] offered up their lives and, in a sense, consecrated the act with a formula of words, so that, as they fell, their blood might placate the anger of the gods and so save the Roman army. There is no reason, then, even for the holy martyrs to imagine that they have done anything deserving citizenship in that City of true and everlasting felicity, simply because they have striven, to the shedding of their blood, for the sake of their brothers—or, for that matter, of the enemies who shed their blood. After all, they were under a law to love with the faith of charity and the charity of faith.

There is the example of Marcus Pulvillus.[9] While dedicating a temple in honor of Jupiter, Juno, and Minerva, he was falsely informed by some of his enemies that his son had died. They hoped that he would be too moved to continue, and his colleague thus would have the glory of the dedication. But, the greed for glory conquered the grief in his broken heart. He remained unmoved, and told them to bury the boy without benefit of a funeral ceremony. What, then, of the disciple, solicitous for his father's burial to whom our Lord said: 'Follow me and let the dead bury the dead'?[10] Why should we say that he did anything outstanding for the holy Gospel? Is it not by such preaching that the citizens of the heavenly country are brought together and freed from many errors?

Recall how Marcus Regulus,[11] rather than break his oath,

7 Matt. 10.28
8 Cf. Book IV, Ch. 20.
9 Cf. Livy 2.8.
10 Matt. 8.22.
11 Cf. Book I, Ch. 15.

returned from Rome to Carthage, after telling the Romans that no one who had been in slavery to the Africans could maintain the dignity of a Roman citizen. Whereupon, the Carthaginians tortured him to death for the speech he had made against them in the Senate. What kind of cruelty, then, should we not endure in order to remain true to that City into whose blessedness we are led by the truth of faith. Is anything really 'Rendered to the Lord for all the things He hath rendered us'[12] even when a man, for the sake of the true faith which is owing to God, suffers the kind of treatment that Regulus suffered for the sake of the good faith which he owed his direst enemies?

Or, suppose a Christian walks the way of voluntary poverty, which, in this pilgrimage of life, is the quickest way to the home where God Himself is our true riches. How can he dare to boast, once he has heard or read the story of Lucius Valerius?[13] He died while he was consul, but he was so poor that a collection had to be taken among the people to pay for the funeral. Or, let a Christian hear or read the story of Quintius Cincinnatus.[14] He owned no more than four acres of land and he was ploughing them with his own hands when he was taken off to be dictator—which is, of course, more than being a consul. But, once he had defeated the enemy and gained immense glory, he returned to his former poverty.

Even though a Christian can be seduced by no earthly promise from citizenship in the Eternal City, he should learn not to boast of what he has done. Fabricius,[15] who was loaded down by the gifts of Pyrrhus, King of Epirus, and was prom-

12 Ps. 115.12.
13 Actually, P. Valerius Publicola; cf. Livy 2.16.
14 This occurred during the Aequian War in 458 B.C.; cf. Livy 3.26-29.
15 C. Fabricius Luscinus; the story is told by Plutarch, 'Life of Pyrrhus' 20.

ised a quarter of the kingdom if only he would secede from Rome, preferred to remain there in poverty as a private citizen. For the Romans, the Commonwealth meant the common wealth, the people's wealth, the country's wealth. When it was at the height of its opulence, Rome's citizens were so poor in private that once, when a man who twice had been consul was found to have ten pounds of silver hidden in a vase, he was accused by the censor and expelled from the Senate of those poor men. Even those were poor by whose triumphs the public treasury was filled. Surely, Christians have a better motive for holding all their wealth in common. They have the ideal, mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles of dividing 'to all, according as everyone had need . . .; neither did anyone say that aught of the things which he possessed was his own, but all things were common unto them.'[16] And they ought to understand that they have no reason to talk boastfully about this. After all, they are doing very little more to gain citizenship with the angels than the pagans did to maintain their Roman greatness.

All such stories which are found in the Roman writers would never have become known and never have been retold so frequently had not the Roman Empire spread so far and wide and developed with such astonishing success. What the Romans wanted was an empire large and long enduring, famous for its citizens of shining virtues. They got what they wanted. They received their reward. But, their example is meant as a lesson for us. If we do not practice for the glorious City of God the virtues which, in some sense, are like those which they practiced for the sake of glory in the city on earth, we ought to be ashamed; if we do practice them, we

16 Acts 2.45; 4.32.

have no reason to be proud. For, as the Apostle says: 'the sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come that shall be revealed in us.'[17] Whereas, their life might well be compared with the human and temporal glory they received.

Another lesson concerns those who put Christ to death. It was revealed in the New Testament, what was not clear from the Old, that the one and true God should be worshiped for the sake of everlasting life and unending rewards and citizenship in the Heavenly City and not for any earthly and temporal returns. It is not surprising that the Jews fell a prey to the glory of the Romans, that those who by wickedness killed and rejected the Giver of the true glory of the Eternal City should fall before those who sought, and secured at least with virtues of a sort, their glory on earth.

Chapter 19

There is certainly a difference between the passion for human glory and the passion for domination. Although it is easy to slip from immoderate greed of human glory into a burning passion for domination, those who seek true glory—though merely in the mouths of men—nevertheless are careful not to offend men of sound judgment. For, in moral matters, much that is good is rightly praised even by many who do not practice what they praise, and it is by these praiseworthy virtues that glory, rule, and domination are sometimes sought. Sallust had this in mind when he spoke of the virtuous man seeking by 'the right road.'

On the other hand, a man who is out to dominate and rule, without regard for a good name and without any fear

17 Rom. 8.18.

of displeasing men of sound judgment, will usually try to get what he wants even at the price of open and flagrant crimes. Thus, a man who is greedy for glory will seek for it by the right road, or, if he uses 'wiles and guile,' will pretend to be good even though he is not. Therefore, for a man who is truly good, it is a great virtue to despise glory with a contempt that is known to God, but hidden from the judgment of men. For, anything he could do to make his contempt of glory appear before the eyes of men might be taken as a bid for more praise and so of more glory; then, there would be nothing he could do to prove the suspicions unfounded. But, a man who cares nothing for the judgments of those who praise him cares nothing for the rash judgments of those who suspect him—although, if he is a good man, he will not be indifferent to their salvation. Anyone whose virtues are from the Spirit of God will be so in love with righteousness as to love his very enemies, and he will so love those who hate him or slander him that he will want to correct them and have them for his friends, if not on earth, at least in Heaven. When people praise him, he will think little of the praise, but he will not think little of their love for him; and, out of fear of deceiving those who love him, he will not mislead those who praise him. So, he will do the best he can to have the praise referred to Him who is the Source of all in man that can be rightly praised.

But, to despise glory out of greed for domination is to be worse than a wild beast either in cruelty or in lust. Some Romans were guilty of this. They kept their lust for power even when they lost their love of honor. History proves that there have been many such people. The first to reach the topmost pinnacle of this vice was the Emperor Nero. He was so lost in lust, that his conscience balked at nothing that a

man could do. He was so cruel, that only those who knew him could believe he had any tenderness in him.

Nevertheless, even to such men power to dominate is given only by the providence of the supreme God and only when He judges that human license calls for such lords. The wisdom of God, speaking in the words of Revelation, makes this clear: 'Through me kings reign and through me tyrants dominate the earth.'[1] And, lest the line of Virgil, 'my pledge of peace to hold the tyrant's hand,'[2] should lead us to take 'tyrant' in the old meaning of 'heroes' rather than in that of very bad and wicked kings, it is openly said in another text of Scripture that God 'maketh a man that is a hypocrite to reign for the sins of the people.'[3]

So far, I have been trying to show to the best of my ability why the one true and just God aided the Romans, who were good men, at least according to the standard of the earthly city, to achieve the glory of a very great empire. But, the text just cited suggests that there may be another and more hidden cause, in those differences in human merits which are better known to God than to us. We have to remember that those who are not citizens of the Eternal City (the City of God, as it is called in our revealed writings[4]) are better citizens of the city on earth when they have even virtue motivated by glory rather than no virtue at all—although, of course, all who have the true faith are agreed that, without true religion or the right worship of the true God, no one can have true virtue, and that no virtue motivated by human glory can be true.

1 Prov. 8.15,16.
2 *Aeneid* 7.266.
3 Job. 34.30.
4 Ps. 45.5; 47.2; 86.3.

Now, nothing could be better for the world than that, by the mercy of God, those should be in power who join to true faith and a good life the art of political government. Such men attribute all their virtues, however many they may have on earth, to the grace of God, who bestows them on those who desire them and, believing in Him, pray for them. And such men understand how far they fall short of the perfection of holiness such as exists in the society of the holy angels, toward which they are striving. However much, then, we praise and glorify that virtue which is without true faith and is motivated by human glory, it is not to be compared even with the tiny beginnings of the holiness of the saints for which we must look only to the grace and mercy of the true God.

Chapter 20

Those philosophers who regard virtue as the ultimate human good try to make those others feel ashamed of themselves who think highly enough of the virtues, but who subordinate them to physical pleasure, making pleasure an end in itself and virtues merely a means to this end. They do this by picturing Pleasure enthroned like a high-born queen, surrounded by ministering virtues who watch her every nod, ready to do whatever she bids them. Thus, she bids Prudence to examine carefully in what way Pleasure may be both supreme and safe. She commands Justice to render whatever services she can in the interest of friendships which are necessary for bodily comfort, and to avoid doing wrong, lest Pleasure might be jeopardized by the breaking of laws. She bids Fortitude keep her mistress, Pleasure, very much in mind, so that, when the body suffers some affliction, short of death, the memory of former pleasures may mitigate the

pangs of present pain. She orders Temperance to take just so much of food or of other pleasant things that health may not be endangered by any excess, or Pleasure (which, for the Epicureans, is mainly a matter of bodily health) be seriously checked.

Thus, the virtues with all the glory of their dignity are made to minister to Pleasure, like the servants of an imperious but ill-famed mistress. The Stoics are right when they say that no picture could be more ugly and ignominious and difficult for good people to look at than this. But, I do not see how the picture becomes much more beautiful if we imagine the virtues ministering to human glory. For, if Glory is not exactly a lovely lady, she has a certain vanity and inanity about her. Certainly, it ill becomes the gravity and solidity of the virtues to be her servants; so that, apart from pleasing men and serving their vain glory, Prudence should make no provision, Justice should share nothing, Fortitude tolerate nothing, Temperance moderate nothing. Ugly as this picture is, it fits those self-complacent and seeming philosophers who, in the guise of despising glory, pay no heed to what others think. Their virtue, if they have any, is just as much a slave to glory, though in a different way. For what is the self-complacent man but a slave to his own self-praise.

It is different with the man who believes in, hopes in, loves, and truly worships God. He gives more attention to the defects in which he takes no pleasure than to whatever virtues he may have and which are not so much pleasing to him as to the truth. And whatever he finds that is pleasing he attributes solely to the mercy of Him whom he fears to displease, thanking God meanwhile for the defects which have been corrected and praying for the correction of the others.

Chapter 21

The conclusion from all this is that the power to give a people a kingdom or empire belongs only to the same true God who gives the Kingdom of Heaven with its happiness only to those who believe in Him, while He gives the earthly city to both believers and unbelievers alike, according to His Will which can never be unjust. This much of what I have said so far God wanted to be clear to us. However, it would be too much for me and beyond my powers to discuss men's hidden merits and to measure in an open balance those which have been rewarded by the establishment of kingdoms.

This much I know. The one true God, who never permits the human race to be without the working of His wisdom and His power, granted to the Roman people an empire, when He willed it and as large as He willed it. It was the same God who gave kingdoms to the Assyrians and even to the Persians —by whom, according to their Scriptures, only two gods are worshiped, one good and one evil. So, too, to the Hebrew people, of whom I have already said enough concerning their exclusive worship of none but the one true God and also concerning the period of their rule.

This is the God who gave corn to the Persians without regard to their worshiping the goddess of corn, Segetia. He gave other gifts of lands to peoples who gave no worship to all those gods whom the Romans assigned, sometimes singly and sometimes in groups, to the care of each particular thing. He gave the Romans their empire without regard to the worship of all those gods that seemed to them the condition of their conquests.

It was this God, too, who gave power to men, to Marius and Caesar, to Augustus and Nero, to the Vespasians, father

and son, who were such kindly emperors, and also to Domitian who was so cruel; and, not to mention all the others, to Constantine the Christian and to Julian the Apostate—the man whose marvelous gifts were poisoned by his lust for power. Julian fell a victim to a silly and sacrilegious occultism. He put his trust in vain oracles and, relying on them for victory, he once burned the ships transporting his supplies. On another occasion, he let rash ardor get the better of him. He paid the price of recklessness by his death in enemy country, and his army was left in such straits that its only hope to escape was—in contradiction of the prophecy of the god, Terminus, which I mentioned above[1]—by changing the frontiers of the Roman Empire. The fact was that the god Terminus, who defied Jupiter, yielded to necessity.

All such things the one true God rules and governs according to His will. And, though His reasons may be hidden, they have never been unjust.

Chapter 22

The length of wars, whether short or long, depends, like all other afflictions and consolations of mankind, on the justice and mercy of Divine Will. The war against the pirates and the Third Punic War were conducted, respectively, by Pompey and Scipio with incredible speed and finished in the shortest of time.[1] The war against the rebellious gladiators, which cost the Romans the defeat of many generals and two

1 Cf. Book IV, Chs. 23, 29.

1 The war against the pirates in 57 B.C was ended in less than forty days. The Third Punic War lasted from 149 to 146 B C., but came to a rapid conclusion after Scipio took command in 147.

consuls and the devastation and desolation of a large part of Italy, ended after a short three years of carnage.[2]

When the Piceni, Marsi and Peligni, who were Italians and not aliens, revolted in the name of liberty after a long and faithful submission to the Roman yoke, the Romans who had now conquered many peoples and had wiped out Carthage found themselves in this Italian war. More than once suffering defeat, Rome counted among her dead two consuls and some noble Senators. However, not even this calamity was too long drawn out. It came to an end in the fifth year.[3]

It was different with the Second Punic War. It lasted for eighteen years and the devastations and defeats of the republic reduced the Roman forces almost to extinction. In two battles, almost 70,000 Romans fell.[4] The First Punic War lasted no less than twenty-three years;[5] the Mithridatic War, forty.[6] And let no one imagine that the more primitive Romans were more vigorous in the rapid prosecution of their wars. In the good old days, so famous for all kinds of valor, the Samnite War[7] lasted nearly fifty years, and during it the Romans were once so worsted that they were made to pass under the yoke. However, they violated the peace treaty which they had accepted, because it was not for the sake of justice that they

2 The Third Servile War (73-71 B.C.), started by Spartacus, was ended by Pompey.

3 The Social War, begun in 90 B.C., was ended in 88. The two consuls, P. Rutilius Lupus and L. Porcius Cato, were killed in 90 and 89 respectively.

4 The war lasted from 218 to 202 B.C. At the Battle of Trasimene Lake (217), 15,000 Romans were lost; at the Battle of Cannae (216), according to Livy (22.49), 45,000 were lost.

5 264-241 B.C.

6 St. Augustine is here following Orosius (3.22), but the usual dates for the three Mithridatic Wars are: 88-84; 83-81; 74-64 B.C.

7 Another following of Orosius; actually, the dates of the first three Samnite Wars were: 343-341; 326-304; 298-290 B.C.. A final short Samnite War was decided in 272.

loved glory, but rather, it seems, justice for the sake of glory.

I have recalled these facts because some who are ignorant of history, or at least, pretend to be ignorant pounce on our religion the very moment they notice that a war lasts a little longer in the Christian era. If there were no Christianity, they claim, and if only the gods were worshiped in the ancient way, then the Roman valor which used to end wars so quickly with the help of Mars and Bellona would end this war, too. Let these people recall when they have read what I have written how protracted were the wars of the pagan Romans, how varied in their outcome, how tragic the defeats. Let them remember that the whole earth, like a stormy sea, is always beaten by the storm of such calamities. Let them tell the truth even when it hurts, and stop injuring themselves by insensate obloquies against God, and injuring others by playing on their ignorance.

Chapter 23

These men, who should be rejoicing with gratitude over a very recent marvel of the mercy of God, are doing everything they can to bury the fact in oblivion. Were I to keep silence I should be as ungrateful as they are.

The facts are these. Radagaisus, King of the Goths, had an immense and ferocious army. He was already on the outskirts of the city, ready for a sudden attack on the Romans.[1] Yet, in a single day, so quickly was he conquered that not one Roman was wounded, let alone killed, while more than 100,000 of his men were strewn about the ground and he himself was captured and very properly put to death.

Suppose a man as irreligious as Radagaisus had entered

1 A.D. 406.

Rome with his pagan troops, whom would he have spared? What respect would he have shown for the graves of the martyrs? Would he have spared any man out of fear of God? Would any blood have remained unshed, any modesty have been left unmolested? And what a shout the pagans would have raised to honor their gods, and how they would have boasted that Radagaisus had shown such power and been victorious because he had offered daily sacrifice and prayers to the gods whose worship the Christian religion had forbidden in Rome.

While he was approaching the place where, by the omnipotence of God, he was conquered, his fame spread far and wide. I was at Carthage at the time and I was told that the pagans believed and boasted and were spreading the word that Radagaisus, befriended, defended and helped by the gods to whom he was said to offer daily sacrifice, could never be overcome by men who refused to offer sacrifices to the Roman gods and forbade them to be offered by others.

And, now, for this great mercy of God, the puzzled pagans offer no thanks. First, God decided to punish with a Barbarian invasion sins that were deserving of a worse visitation. Then, He tempered His indignation with His mercy, and allowed Radagaisus to be miraculously defeated. He did not want weak minds to be turned by any glory given to the demons whose aid had been invoked. But, a little later, He allowed Rome to be taken by barbarians who had such reverence for Christianity that, counter to all previous customs of war, they spared all who took sanctuary in the holy places. At the same time, these barbarians were so hostile to the demons and the rites of pagan sacrifices on which Radagaisus had relied that, in the name of Christianity, they waged a fiercer war on these gods than on living men.

Thus it is that the true Lord and Governor of the world has been merciful even while punishing the Romans. He has shown by the marvelous victory over the worshipers of demons that pagan sacrifices have no value for temporal life. His purpose was to save the half-Christians—those who are Christians not by inflexible convictions but by cautious prudence—from deserting the true religion and to help them persevere in faithful expectation of Eternal Life.

Chaper 24

When we say that some of the Christian emperors are blest, we do not mean they are happy because they reigned many years; or because, when they died in peace, their sons reigned in their steads; or because they conquered the enemies of the republic; or because they were warned in time to put down the rebellions of seditious citizens. Such rewards and consolations in this troubled life have been rightly bestowed even on those who have worshiped pagan gods and who did not belong, like Christians, to the Kingdom of God. The reason for this is God's mercy. He does not want those who believe in Him to look upon such favors as God's highest gifts.

We call those Christian emperors happy who govern with justice, who are not puffed up by the tongues of flatterers or the services of sychophants, but remember that they are men. We call them happy when they think of sovereignty as a ministry of God and use it for the spread of true religion; when they fear and love and worship God; when they are in love with the Kingdom in which they need fear no fellow sharers; when they are slow to punish, quick to forgive; when they punish, not out of private revenge, but only when forced by

the order and security of the republic, and when they pardon, not to encourage impunity, but with the hope of reform; when they temper with mercy and generosity the inevitable harshness of their decrees.

We call those happy who are all the more disciplined in their lusts just because they are freer to indulge them; who prefer to curb the waywardness of their own passions rather than to rule the peoples of the world, and who do this not out of vain glory but out of love for everlasting bliss; men, finally, who, for their sins, do not fail to offer to the true God the sacrifice of humility, repentance, and prayer.

We say of such Christian emperors that they are, in this life, happy in their hope, but destined to be happy in reality when that day shall come for which we live in hope.

Chapter 25

God who is good did not wish that men who believed in Him and adored Him for the sake of eternal life should think that none but those who sought the aid of demons, who are powerful in such matters, could attain to worldly greatness or political dominion. For this reason, the Christian Emperor Constantine, no suppliant of the demons but a worshiper of the true God, was loaded with more earthly favors than any man could dare to hope for. It was granted to him to found a great city, daughter and companion of Rome and of her empire, yet without a single temple or statue of the pagan gods. His reign was long,[1] and alone, like another Augustus, he ruled and defended the whole Roman world. In the planning and conducting of his wars he was most successful, and

1 A.D. 306-337.

he never failed to defeat the usurpers who opposed him. Worn out by sickness and his years, he died in a good old age and left the succession to his sons.

On the other hand, God did not wish any emperor to become a Christian merely to enjoy the good fortune of a Constantine—no one should become a Christian for any motive but eternal life. And so, to Jovian He gave a shorter reign than to Julian.[2] He allowed Gratian[3] to die by the sword of a usurper—though the death was far less tragic than that of the great Pompey, a worshiper of the Roman gods. Pompey failed to be revenged by Cato, whom he had left as his heir to carry on the civil war; whereas Gratian—little as Christian souls look for such solace—was revenged by Theodosius whom he made co-regent, preferring, as he did, a firm alliance to personal power, and preferring Theodosius to his younger brother.

Chapter 26

Theodosius[1] was not only true to the fidelity he owed while Gratian was alive, but, after his death, he received Gratian's young brother Valentinian as a Christian welcomes an orphan and he protected him with fatherly affection. Valentinian had been driven out by Maximus, the murderer of Gratian. Had Theodosius been moved by lust for power more than by love of doing good, he could easily have rid himself of Valentinian after reducing him to poverty. Instead,

2 Julian, 361-363; Jovian, from June 363 to February 364.

3 Gratian was made co-emperor by his father Valentinian in 367. He was full emperor from 375 to 383.

1 Theodosius became co-Augustus in 379; he reigned until 395.

he not only maintained Valentinian in his imperial dignity, but showered on him every sign of graciousness and favor.

In the meantime, Maximus' initial success had made him an enemy to be feared. In this crisis, Theodosius was not tempted by recourse to any illicit and sacrilegious oracles, but preferred to consult the hermit John in the Egyptian desert, a servant of God who was famous far and wide for his spirit of prophecy. The answer came back that victory was certain.

As soon as Theodosius had disposed of the usurper Maximus, he restored the young Valentinian, whom he both pitied and esteemed, to the part of the empire from which he had been driven. Valentinian died shortly after—naturally or by some traitorous design—and the usurper Eugenius had himself illegally elected as his successor. Theodosius, assured by another prophetic intimation, took up arms against the immensely powerful army of this tyrant and, more by prayers than battles, overcame him. Soldiers who took part in the war have told me that they felt their weapons torn from their hands. So fierce a wind blew from where Theodosius had his forces that it not merely halted enemy javelins and arrows but blew them back into their own faces. Hence, the poet Claudian —who was no friend of Christianity—sang in praise of Theodosius:

> O Happy man, of whom your God is fond,
> Your bugles call, and all the winds respond.[2]

And so he conquered, as he believed he would and as had been predicted. His first step was to demolish the statues of Jupiter which had been set up in the Alps with rites and in-

2 *De tertio consulatu Honorii Augusti,* lines 96-98.

cantations for his harm. Jove's lightnings, which were made of gold, he gave with cheerful generosity to his couriers. To cap the pleasant occasion, they jokingly replied that it was a pleasure to be struck by lightning of that sort. The children of his enemies (who had been killed, not by his orders, but in the heat of battle) sought sanctuary in a church, although they were not Christians. Theodosius, whose only desire was that they should become Christians, treated them with Christian charity, allowed them to keep their property and titles, and even added to them. After the victory, he allowed no one to seek any private vengeance.

Unlike Cinna, Marius, Sulla, and others who fought civil wars and kept up a battle of hate even after the heat of battle was over, Theodosius always began his wars with reluctance, and never ended them with rancor. For all his preoccupations from the very start of his reign, he found time, by wise and temperate laws, to help the Church, struggling with her enemies, much as the heretic Valens,[3] by his indulgence to the Arians, had done it grievous harm. He was happier, in fact, to be a member of the Church than monarch of the world. On the ground that even temporal prosperity is the gift of the true God and not of pagan divinities, he ordered their idols to be everywhere destroyed.

As for his religious humility, it was never more marvelously revealed than in the case of the Thessalonians.[4] They had committed a grave crime, but he promised pardon at the petition of the bishop. However, under pressure from the members of his retinue, he yielded to vengeance. Thereupon, ecclesiastical authority compelled him to make reparation,

3 Emperor of the East, 364-378.
4 The classical account of the incident is in Gibbon, *Decline and Fall,* Vol. III, Ch. 27.

and the people who saw him, penitent and prostrate in all his princely trappings, were now more inclined to sob and intercede for him than, when he was angered, they had feared his vengeance.

It was such good deeds and others like them, too many to mention here, which Theodosius took with him when he left behind the fleeting puff of all this human pomp and power. Their reward is the everlasting bliss which is given by God only to those who are truly devout. Other glories and good things in this life God gives to the good and the evil alike—as He gives to all the sky and light and air, the earth and fruits, the soul and body of man, his senses and mind and life. And among God's temporal gifts is the greatness of this or that empire which Providence dispenses as occasion calls.

There is another defense of the gods which, I see, must now be answered. Confuted by the most cogent proofs and convinced that no amount of false divinities can help us to obtain those temporal goods which only fools can passionately desire, our pagan friends try to claim that their gods are to be worshiped, not for favors in this present life, but for favors after death. As for those who want to worship shadows for the sake of worldly satisfactions and childishly complain that this is not permitted, I think they have been sufficiently refuted in these first five books. As soon as I had published the first three and they had gained a wide circulation, I was told that a number of writers were preparing some kind of a rebuttal of what I had written. Later, I was told that this was already written, but that they were waiting for a time when it would be less perilous to publish it. My advice to them is to stop hoping for what cannot help them. It is easy, of course, for anyone to imagine he has replied, simply because he was unwilling to keep quiet.

For, who is more talkative than a man who has nothing to say? An empty head, if it will, can make more noise than one that is full of truth. Only truth convinces. Let these men consider carefully all that I have written. If they will do this with an unprejudiced mind, they may come to see that their brash garrulity, and worse, the quips of their miming and mumming, have left my arguments unanswered. It may be better for them to keep their fiddle-faddle to themselves and to learn from the wise rather than be lauded by fools.

Perhaps they are not waiting for liberty to speak the truth, but merely for a license to lie. I can only hope that theirs will not be the lot of the man in Cicero who thought he was happy because he was free to sin. 'O unhappy the man for whom lust was lawful.'[5] Anyone who thinks that a license to lie will make him happy will be far happier if he is silenced by the law. But if, in the meantime, these men will put aside their baseless boasting and, here and now, in the interest of genuine debate, question any point they will, then in a friendly discussion, fair, serious, and free, they will get all the answers I am able to give them.

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5 Cf. *Tusculan Disputations* 5.19,55.

BOOK VI

Preface

IN THE FIVE preceding Books, I have, I hope, sufficiently refuted those who think that many gods are to be venerated and worshiped. Such people hold that, in order to gain advantages for this mortal life and men's temporal affairs, the gods are to be served with an adoration which the Greeks call *latreía* and which is due to the true God alone. Christian truth makes clear that these gods are false, that they are useless idols, or unclean spirits, or dangerous demons, or, at best, mere creatures and not the Creator. Of course, as everyone knows, neither my five Books nor any five hundred books are sufficient to silence folly and pertinacity. It is the glory of vain men never to yield to the truth. Such vain glory is a deadly passion for those it dominates. It is a disease that, in spite of every effort, is never cured —not because the doctor is inept, but because the patient is incurable.

Those others, however, who reflect on what they read and judge it with little or no obstinacy in their previous error, will easily come to feel that, in the five Books which I have just finished, I have said more, rather than less, than the question in debate required. They will also agree that the ill will against the Christian religion which is stirred up by people ignorant of history and who blame on us the disasters of life and the crumbling and collapse of civilization is without foundation. It is not a conclusion of right thinking and reasoning, but the evidence of reckless and malicious animosity. The facts

are clear, even though some of the scholars pretend not to know them, or, yielding to irrational hate, deliberately encourage the bigotry.

Chapter 1

My next purpose, then, as I have already indicated, will be the refutation and instruction of those who hold that the gods of the pagans, which Christianity rejects, are to be worshiped, not on account of this life, but with a view to life after death. The starting point of this discussion will be the revealed truth of the holy psalm: 'Blessed is the man whose trust is in the name of the Lord; and who hath not had regard to vanities and lying follies.'[1]

In the din of all the lying inanities and insanities of men, it is bearable enough to listen to the voice of those philosophers who scorned the erroneous opinions of the populace. But, the people themselves set up idols for their gods and then invented all sorts of discreditable fictions about their immortals, or else believed in fictions already current and mixed these fictions with their sacred rites and ceremonies.

The philosophers were not always free to speak openly, but in their academic discussions they hinted at their rejection of popular superstitions. With such men, then, I find no difficulty in debating this question: Whether it is better to worship the one God who created all spiritual and corporal realities and to worship Him with a view to life after death, or to worship the many gods whom the best and greatest of the philosophers felt to have been made and set in their lofty positions by Him?

First, a word about the gods I mentioned in Book IV as

1 Ps. 39.5.

having some paltry and particular function assigned to them. No philosopher, I am sure, would dream of discussing whether such gods can give us immortal life. But, what of those men, some of them extremely learned and acute, who boast of having written useful books of instructions to help people to know why each of the different gods is to be prayed to, and what is to be asked of each, and how to avoid the unbecoming absurdity of asking, like a clown on the stage, for water from Bacchus or for wine from the Lymphae? Would they take responsibility for a person who, when praying the immortal gods and asking the Lymphae for wine and getting the answer: 'We have only water, ask Bacchus for wine,' should rightly say: If you have no wine, give me, at any rate, your immortal life?

Just think of the monstrous absurdity of the Lymphae answering with a laugh—for, according to Virgil,[2] they are given to laughter—'O man, do you think we have power to give you life [*vitam*], when you have just been told that we can't even give you wine [*vitem*]!' (I am supposing that, unlike the demons, they would not try to deceive him.) It is indeed monstrous and absurd to ask or hope for eternal life from gods like this. Here they are so assigned to such tiny and fragmentary adjuncts of our sad and transient life that, when you ask one of them for something in the department of another, you get a situation as ridiculous as a scurrilous embarassment on the stage.

If we have a right to laugh in the theatre where actors know their parts, we should laugh still louder at ignorant fools in real life. Yet, in regard to gods and goddesses set up by various cities, learned men have discovered and listed

2 *Eclogues* 3.9: . . . *sed faciles Nymphae risere.*

what each must be asked for, for example, what we should ask of Bacchus, the Lymphae, Vulcan, and the rest, many of whom—but not all that I might have done—I mentioned in Book IV. Just think. If it is a mistake to ask wine of Ceres, bread of Bacchus, water of Vulcan, fire from the Lymphae, you can imagine how crazy we ought to consider a man who should ask any of such gods for eternal life. To confirm the point, recall what was said when we were discussing the question whether any of the gods or goddesses could be thought powerful enough to confer on men an earthly kingdom. It was shown, after an exhaustive discussion, that certainly political societies could not be constituted by any of the many, false divinities. Would it, then, not be as irreligious as it would be ridiculous to think that any of the gods could confer that membership in eternal society which is most certainly incomparably better than membership in all the earthly kingdoms put together?

We saw, too, that the reason why such gods can give no kingdoms to men on earth was not the impropriety of beings so great and lofty deigning to bother with anything so small and lowly. In the light of human weakness, we have a right to despise even the crumbling peaks of earthly power, yet there is not one of those gods to whom a man would not be ashamed of committing the giving and preserving of human political societies. But if, as we have seen especially from the last two Books, no one of that crowd of gods, little or lofty, was fit to give a mortal society to mortal men, how much less could they make immortal citizens out of mortal men.

Here is another argument that is valid for those who think the gods are to be worshiped, not with a view to benefits in this life, but only in the life after death. Certainly, then, the gods are not to be worshiped for the sake of those separate

and particular things which are only by a stretch of imagination, and not in reality, in the power of this or that particular god. Yet, this is the position of those who think the worship of the gods is necessary for benefits in this present life. I have done the best I could in the last five Books to dispose of such people.

Let us suppose for a moment that those who worship the goddess, Youth, were always in the flower of youth, while those who neglected her always died young or suffered the listlessness of old age; or, again, suppose that Fortuna Barbata always prematurely clothed the cheeks of her worshipers with a lovely beard, while her scorners were left beardless or had nothing but down. At least we could say that, within their limited sphere, these divinities could do what they were supposed to do. But, it would follow that we should not ask Juventas for eternal life since it was not her job to give us even a beard; nor ask Fortuna Barbata for any good in the life to come, since, in this life, she has no power to give us the vigor of youth which goes with the growing of beards.

There is, then, no need to worship such gods for the sake of the benefits they are supposed to confer. The fact is that many who worship Juventas had nothing of the youthful vigor of many who paid so much worship; and many who have prayed to Fortuna Barbata had a shapeless beard or none at all, and are the laughing stock of finely bearded men who paid her no sort of service. No human intelligence is so dull as to believe that a worship of such gods can bear any fruit in eternity, when the worship with a view to temporal and passing benefits and within the sphere of their competence is seen to be silly and vain.

Such gods, then, cannot give us eternal life. Not even those who wanted them to be worshiped by the ignorant populace

dared to make such a claim. They were content to divide up the occupations of earthly life, and, to keep all of their gods busy, assigned to each god a particular job.

Chapter 2

No one has investigated the gods with more care than Marcus Varro. No other scholar has discovered so much, no one has given more care to the matter, no one has made such acute distinctions, no one has written so diligently and so much as he. His style may not be remarkable, but what he has written is so replete with facts and ideas that in the sphere of secular or liberal scholarship he may be called the master of history as Cicero is the prince of style.

Cicero himself confirms what I say. In his *Academica* he speaks of his discussion with Marcus Varro as with a man 'who is easily the most brilliant of his age and, undoubtedly, the most learned.'[1] He does not say 'elegant in style' or 'most eloquent' because, in fact, Varro does not shine as a writer; but he does say that he was 'brilliant' and in the *Academica*, where he treats of skepticism in philosophy, Cicero adds that Varro was undoubtedly 'most learned.' In fact, in this instance, Cicero was so certain as to exclude his habitual skepticism. It is as though he forgot that he was a Skeptical philosopher at least in regard to this one matter, even in a defense of Skeptical philosophy. In his first book, in discussing the literary works of Varro, Cicero has this to say: 'When we had lost our way in our city, as though we were strangers, your books showed us the way home. We finally learned who and where we were. You left nothing untouched: the antiquity of our country, the periods of its history, the rules of worship,

1 *Acad. Post.* III, *proemium.*

the priestly laws, our domestic and public life, the topography of our cities and the names, divisions, functions, and causes of all things human and divine.'

The poet Terentian had this remarkable and exceptional scholarship in mind when he wrote of Varro as 'a man of universal knowledge.'[2] He had read so much that we marvel he had time to write. He wrote so much that no one man, you would think, could read it all. Now, this man, so brilliant and so learned, could not have set down things about the gods more ridiculous, offensive, and scandalous, even if he had set out as an opponent and critic of the so-called religion about which he writes, and if he had taken the view that it was not religion at all but merely superstition.

Yet, while Varro worshiped the gods and felt they should be worshiped, his very work about them indicates his fear about their survival. He was not so much afraid of foreign invaders as of the devastation by his own people's indifference, and it was to save the gods from this, he says, and to keep them alive in the memory of good men that he wrote his works. He was performing a more useful service, he felt, than Metellus in saving the Vestal Palladium from the flames and Aeneas in saving the gods from the ruins of Troy. Yet, the fact is that he has set forth things for the whole world to read which are abhorrent to philosophers and fools and are of no service at all to true religion. It looks very much as though, for all his acumen and learning, he had none of that liberty of spirit which is a gift of the Holy Spirit, and was, in fact, a slave to legalism, and tradition; yet, below his superficial commendation of. pagan religion, there is a hint of his real convictions in some of his admissions.

2 *Vir doctissimus undecumque Varro* is line 2846 of Book IV of the *De metris* of Terentianus Maurus, who lived in the third century.

Chapter 3

Varro wrote forty-one books under the title *Antiquities.* He divided his matter under two headings, human and divine, devoting twenty-five books to the former and sixteen to the latter. He followed the plan of devoting six books to each of four subdivisions under the heading 'Things Human': Persons, Places, Times, and Actions—dealing in the first six with persons, in the second six with places, and the third six with times, in the fourth and last six, with actions. These four sixes make twenty-four. At the beginning he placed one book by itself, as a general introduction to the whole. In general, he followed a similar plan in regard to divine things, as far as the subject matter allowed.

Sacred actions are performed by persons in certain places at definite times. And these are the four topics he treats, giving three books to each. The first three deal with the persons who perform the rites, the next three with places, the third with times, the fourth with the rites. Here, too, he is careful to make the distinctions: Who, Where, When and What. The main topic he was expected to deal with was: To whom. Hence, the last three deal with the gods; the five threes making fifteen in all. To make up the total of sixteen which I mentioned, he placed one book by itself at the beginning to serve as a general introduction.

Thus, there were five main divisions. Immediately after the introduction came the three books dealing with persons. These were again subdivided, so that the first dealt with the pontiffs, the next with augurs, the third with the Sacred College of Fifteen.[1] Of the second three books dealing with places,

1 The custodians and interpreters of the Sibylline books, instituted by Tarquinius Superbus and brought up to the number fifteen by Sulla.

the first was about shrines; the second, about temples; the third, about sacred places. The next four dealt with time or holy days. The first of these was concerned with festivals; the next, with circus games; the third, with theatrical performances. Of the fourth trio of books dealing with worship, one concerned consecrations; the next, private worship; the last, public rites.

At the end of this procession, so to speak, of religious observances come the gods themselves, to whom all the observances are directed. They are dealt with in three other books, of which, the first concerned the known gods; the second, the unknown gods; the third and last dealt with the select major divinities.

Chapter 4

Now, in this whole series of volumes, so beautiful in the skillful arrangement of matter, one will look in vain for any mention of eternal life. Indeed, it would be illogical to hope or to wish for any such mention. From what I have already said and, still more from what remains to be said, the reason for this is obvious to anyone who is not blinded by his own obstinacy. Everything here treated of is an invention either of men or of demons—not of 'good demons,' to use their own expression, but, to speak plainly, of unclean spirits and manifestly malign spirits. All of these foster the idea that the human soul has so little reality that it is incapable of reaching and finding rest in unchanging and eternal truth. These malign spirits work secretly and with incredible hatred to fill the minds of wicked people. Sometimes, they openly work on people's senses and call in lying witnesses in their favor.

Varro gives a reason for treating of human things first

and of divine things later, namely, because cities came into existence first and only later instituted religious rites, But, the fact is that true religion owed its foundation to no city; it was itself the foundation of a wholly celestial city. True religion is the revelation and teaching of the true God who is the Giver of eternal life to those who worship him truly.

Varro's justification for treating first of human things and secondly of divine, on the ground that divine worship was instituted by men, is expressed as follows: 'As a painter comes before the painting and the builder before the building, so do cities come before the things which cities instituted.' He admits, however, that, if he had been writing a complete treatise on the nature of the gods, he would have treated first of the gods and then of men. He seems to imply either that he had no intention of treating of all but only of some of the gods, or that some, though not all, of the gods need not have existed before men.

But, how then, explain that when, in his last three books, he treats of known, unknown, and select gods he seems to want to include all of the gods? What can he really mean when he writes: 'If I were writing of the divine and human natures in their totality, I should have first finished the treatment of the gods before entering on a discussion of man'? Is he writing of all, or of some, or of none of the gods? If of all, then the treatment of gods certainly should come first; if of some, there still is no reason why the treatment should not come first. Is it a reproach to man that a few of the gods should be preferred to the whole of humanity? And, even if this is so in regard to the whole of humanity, is it too much of a reproach that a part of the gods should be preferred to the Romans?

His books dealing with human matters do not cover the

whole world, but only the city of Rome. These books, he says, rightly came before the books dealing with divine matters, for the reason, so he says, that the painter comes before the painting and the builder before the building. His assumption is always the same, that religion, like a picture or a building, is the creation of men. We are left with the possibility that he had in mind to write of none of the gods and, without wanting to say this openly, made his intention clear enough to those who read between the lines.

Certainly, when a man says 'not all,' he is usually understood as meaning 'some (though, of course, he might be taken to mean 'none' since 'none' is neither 'some' nor 'all'). Judging from what he says, if he had been writing of *all* of the gods, he should have treated of them before treating of human matters; even though he does not say so, truth demands that he should have treated even of some of the gods—not to insist on all of them—before treating of merely Roman matters. But, what he was dealing with came properly after the discussion of Rome. The conclusion is that he was treating of nothing divine at all.

He had no intention of putting human things before divine things, but he refused to put fictions before facts. In what he writes about human matters, he follows the historians who deal with facts. In what he writes about what he calls 'divine' matters, what does he do but give us feelings about fancies? Here, we have the subtle significance of what he did, both in writing about the 'gods' in second place and in giving an explanation of why he did it.

If he had given no explanation, it might have been possible to find some other defense of his arrangement. However, in the very explanation which Varro gives, he left no other interpretation open. He made it clear, not that he was preferring

the nature of man to the nature of god, but that he was treating of men before treating of human institutions. Thus, he confesses that his books dealing with 'divine' matters were based, not on facts concerning the nature of god, but on fancy—which is another name for error. As I pointed out in Book IV, he made this clear in another place, where he says he would have written according to the rule of nature if he himself had founded a new city, but that, since he was dealing with an old city, he could do nothing but follow the tradition he found there.

Chapter 5

What are we to think of his division of theology, or the systematic treatment of the divine, into three kinds, of which the first is called mythical, the second physical, and the third political? In Latin, we should call the first (if the word were in use) 'fabular'; but, let us call it fabulous, since the Greek *mythos* is the same as the Latin *fabula.* We may call the second 'natural,' for that word is in common use. The third was given the Latin name 'political' by Varro himself. His own explanation runs as follows: 'What they call "mythical" is what is especially in use among the poets; "physical" theology is used by the philosophers; and "political" by ordinary citizens. In the first of these theologies are found many fictions unworthy of the dignity and nature of immortal beings. For, in this kind of theology one divinity [Minerva] was born from another's head, a second [Bacchus] from a thigh, a third [Pegasus] from drops of blood; some gods [e.g., Mercury] were thieves, others [e.g., Jupiter] adulterers, and still others [e.g., Apollo] slaves of men, and in general deeds are attributed to gods which are not merely human but abnormal.'

Here he could speak boldly and with impunity—and he did so without a shadow of ambiguity—of the wrong done to divinity by lying fables. He was talking of 'fabulous' theology, not of natural or political theology, and he felt free to attack it. But, listen to what he says of the second kind of theology. It is the kind, he says, 'about which the philosophers have left many books discussing such questions as: Who are the gods? Where are they to be found? Of what kind and character are they? When did they begin? Are they eternal? Do they originate in fire (as Heraclitus thought), or from numbers (according to Pythagoras), or from atoms (as Epicurus said)? There is much else—all of which is more tolerable to listen to inside a classroom than out in the streets.'

He found nothing to blame in this theology of the philosophers—the *genus physicon* as they call it—save that he mentions the controversies which have made the philosophers the fathers of many dissident sects. He wants the people in the street to have none of this theology. He locks it behind the walls of the schoolrooms. Yet, he did not remove from the man in the street the filthy fancies of the poets!

Oh! how pious are the ears of the people—and, among them, the Roman people! They are too sensitive to listen to what philosophers have to say about the immortal gods, but they listen, and listen gladly, to what poets fancy (because this is counter to the dignity and nature of immortal beings) or to what the actors perform (because on the stage, the gods are not merely men but cads.) And what is worse, to believe the poets and players, such things not merely please, but placate, the gods!

'Very well,' someone will say, but let us hear how Varro explains political theology. We want to separate, as Varro himself did, fabulous and natural theology—the *genus mythi-*

con and the *genus physicon*—from political theology which is now in question.' Well, I can see why we should separate the fabulous—for the simple reason that it is false, filthy, and unfit for discussion. But, why should we separate the natural from the political? Would that not be to admit that the political itself is in need of correction. If a thing is natural, what can be wrong with it, and why should we exclude it? And, if what we call political is not natural, what can make it worth our discussion?

It was, in fact, Varro's own reason for putting this discussion of human things before the discussion of divine things that, in what he called 'divine' things, he was following, not nature, but human conventions. Let us take a look at his 'political theology.' 'There is,' he says, 'a third kind, which the people, and particularly the priests, in the cities ought to know and practice. It belongs to this theology to explain what gods should be worshiped in public and by what rites and sacrifices each one should do this.' What follows is noteworthy. 'The first kind of theology is suitable for the theatre; the second, for the world; the third, for the city.' It is easy to see to what kind he gives the palm. Obviously, to the second, the theology of the philosopher, as he himself calls it. When he says this belongs to the world, he is relating it to that which, in the Stoic view, is the highest of realities. The other two theologies, the first and third, those of the theatre and the city, he does not distinguish, but rather lumps together.

It does not at once follow that what belongs to a city can belong to the world, although cities are part of the world. For, it can happen that in a city, by reason of false opinions, things can be believed or worshiped which have no real existence either in the world or outside of it. But the theatre and city go together. Whoever saw a theatre except in a city? It

was the city that started the theatre, and its only purpose was the representation of plays on the stage. But, what are such representations apart from the gods? This brings us back to the beings which are described with such skill in Varro's books.

Chapter 6

Marcus Varro, you may be 'the most brilliant' man of your age and 'undoubtedly the most learned.' Still, you are a man, not God. You have not even been raised by the Spirit of God to see truly and to tell freely the nature of the divine. Nevertheless, you see clearly enough to separate what is divine from the silly imaginings of men. Yet, you are afraid to denounce popular opinions which are false, and official traditions which are shams, even though you know in your heart that they are repugnant to what is divine and even to such divinity as our poor human intelligence discerns in the elements of the world. This is clear from your own constant references to these opinions and from the tone of all the writings of your friends.

Your human gifts, however remarkable, do not help you here. In straits like these, human learning, however broad and deep, is of no avail. Your heart is with the God of nature, but your head bows where the state wills. You pour out revenge by openly attacking the gods of mythology but, willy-nilly, what you spill falls on the state divinities, too. You say that the mythical and political gods are at home on the stage and in the cities, while the natural gods are at home in the world. But, your point is that the world was made by God, but theatres and cities by men, and that the same gods who are adored in the temples are derided on the stage, and the same gods to whom sacrifice is offered have plays written in their honor.

It would have been more like a gentleman and a scholar to have divided the gods into those which are natural and those which were introduced by men, and to say of these latter that the account given by the poets differs from that of the priests, but that both accounts are so close in the fellowship of falsehood as to delight the demons whose only battle is with the teaching of truth.

I shall discuss 'natural' theology later; omitting it for the moment, I merely ask: Is anyone willing to ask or hope for eternal life from the mythical gods on the stage or the civic gods in the comic shows?

God forbid—may the true god save men from so gross and insane a sacrilege! Just imagine asking eternal life from gods who are pleased and placated by plays which rehearse their own sins. I should think that no one is so irrational and so irreligious as to dance on the edge of such madness. No, neither by mythical nor by political theology does anyone obtain eternal life. The former sows filthy fancies about the gods; the latter reaps by keeping them alive. The one spreads lies, and the other gathers them up; the one belittles divinity with imaginary sins and the other represents this wickedness and calls it public worship; the one puts into song the unmentionable imaginings of men and the other consecrates such things for the festivals of the gods; the one sings sins and crimes and the other loves them; whatever the one discovers or invents the other approves and enjoys.

Both theologies are a disgrace and both should be condemned, but, while the theatrical theology merely teaches turpitude in public, the popular theology wears it like a jewel. Imagine looking for eternal life in places where our brief and passing life is so polluted! If the company of wicked men can so poison our life, once they have won a way into our hearts

and minds, what should we say of fellowship with devils who are worshiped by their own wickedness? The truer the wickedness, the worse for the devils; and, the more it is slanderous, the worse for our worship.

I know that some who read what I am writing and are ignorant of things as they are will imagine that only those things in the celebration of such gods are shocking, ridiculous, and unworthy of the divine majesty which are sung by poets and acted on the stage, while the worship of the priests, unlike that of the actors, is pure and free from impropriety. If this were so, no one would ever have thought that dirty plays should be used to honor the gods, and still less would the gods themselves have ordered them to be played. The fact is that no one is ashamed to worship the gods by such plays in the theatres, because the very same things take place in the temples.

The conclusion is that when Varro tried to distinguish political theology from the mythical and natural, he merely meant that it was something fashioned out of the other two rather than a third, distinct, and separate thing. It was a saying of his that what the poets write is too low for the people to follow and that what the philosophers think is too high for the people to pry into. 'Although they are different, much has been borrowed from both and put to the account of the people. Hence,' he says, 'I shall describe what is common to both along with what is proper to political theology—although this should rely more on the alliance of the philosophers than on that of the poets.' Is there, then, no alliance with the poets? The fact is that in another place he says that, in regard to the genealogies of the gods, the people lean more to the poets than to the philosophers. In the one place he is talking of what ought to be; in the other, of what actually is. He makes the

point that philosophers write for our instructions, while poets write for our amusement. He implies that the people ought not to follow the poets when they write about the crimes of the gods—although they amuse both the people and the gods. He insists that the poets write to amuse, not to instruct. They write such things as the gods like and the people like to look at.

Chapter 7

The poetical theology of the stage and the shows, full as it is of license and lewdness, is taken up into that which is political; and the whole of a theology which people of judgment reproach and reject is reckoned as a part of a theology which should be cherished and adhered to. When I say a part, I do not mean, as I have partly proved, an incongruous part, foreign to the whole body and merely tagged on and ill-connected; I mean a part, like a member of a body, congruously and harmoniously incorporated.

Take, for example, the statues, the shapes, ages, sex, and general characteristics of the gods. Both the poets and the pontiffs have the same bearded Jupiter, the same beardless Mercury. Both the players and the priests have given the same abnormal pudenda to Priapus. He is one and the same whether he makes people laugh as he struts across the stage or whether he is being prayed to in the temple enclosure. Saturn is old and Apollo young, and the masks of the actors are not unlike the statues in the sanctuaries. Forculus, who is in charge of doors, and Limentinus, who is in charge of thresholds, are male; Cardea, who presides over hinges and is placed between them, is feminine. Are not such points which the poets thought unfit to put into poems found in the books dealing with divinities? Does the Diana of the theatre wear

arms, while in the temples she is a simple girl? Or does the stage Apollo alone play the lyre, while the Delphic Apollo refrains from that art? But all this is decent enough in comparison with more shameful things. What conception of Jupiter did they have when they set up a statue of his nurse in the Capitol?

Surely, all this agrees with Euhemerus, who declared that all such gods were simply mortals[1]—and Euhemerus was more than a garrulous story-teller, he was a hard-working historian. And, what shall we say of those who turned a college of priests, the Epulones, into gods to sit with Jupiter like parasites at his table? What is this but to make a comedy out of the cult of the gods? Certainly, if any comedian said that Jupiter had invited parasites as his guests at table, it would be taken as a joke. Yet, Varro said it; and he said it, not in jest, but in praise of the gods. He wrote this, not in the books about human things, but in the books on what is divine; and there, not in connection with stage shows, but in an exposition of the laws of the Capitol. Still under the force of such facts, he breaks down and confesses that, just as men made gods in their own image, so they have believed that gods indulge in human pleasures.

Of course, the evil spirits have been busy at work. It was their business to fix false ideas in men's minds by the plays. They had something to do with the story of the warden of the temple of Hercules, who, finding himself with nothing to do and in a holiday mood, took to playing dice. With one hand he would shoot for Hercules and with the other for himself, with the understanding that if he won he would take enough of the temple funds to pay for a dinner for himself and a lady

1 In his *Hierà anagraphè*, written about 300 B.C.

friend, and, if Hercules won, he would pay from his own pocket to provide the same pleasure for the god. Then, having beaten himself with the hand of Hercules, he payed his debt by providing the meal and, for a girl friend, the lovely Larentina. The girl fell asleep in the temple and dreamed that Hercules, after his pleasure, told her that when she left the temple she would find in the first young man she met a reward which she should regard as being paid by Hercules himself. She left, and the first young man she met was the wealthy Tarutius. He fell in love with her, lived with her a long time, and when he died made her his heir. Not to be outdone in generosity, and imagining that this would please the gods, she bequeathed to the Roman people the immense wealth which had come to her as a divine reward. When she died, the will was found. And they say that for what she had done she was awarded divine honors.

Now, if all this had been a poet's dream or a scene from a play, it would no doubt have been reckoned a part of mythical theology and regarded as unworthy of a place in the theology of the people. Unfortunately, we have it on the authority of Varro himself that this scandalous story belongs to the people, not to the poets; to the guardians of the cults, not to the comedians; to the temples, not to the theatres; to political, not to mythical, theology. No wonder the actors have such success in representing with their theatrical art the turpitude of the gods as it really is, and no wonder the priests find it impossible, by their rites and ceremonies, to reveal a virtue in the gods which is non-existent.

Think of the rites of Juno, celebrated in her beloved island of Samos where she was given in marriage to Jupiter; of the rites of Ceres, and the search for Proserpina after she had been carried off by Pluto; of the rites of Venus and the lamentations

over her lover Adonis, the lovely youth who is killed by the fang of a boar; of the rites of Cybele, the mother of the gods, in which she falls in love with the lovely Attis and then, mad with jealousy, mutilates him, while a chorus of eunuchs, called Galli, lament the calamity.

There is nothing on the stage more indecent than stories like these. Why, then, does anyone try to separate such fables and fancies of the poets, as belonging to the theatre, from that political theology which is said to belong to the state, and, what is worse, on the pretense of separating what is indecent and dishonorable from what is proper and becoming. If anything, we should be grateful to the comedians who have had some regard for men's eyes in their shows and have not revealed in all their nakedness things which are hidden behind the walls of the temples.

And, if the things which are shown by day are so detestable, can any good be said of what happens under the cover of darkness? As for what they do in the dark with eunuchs and perverts, let that remain on their own consciences. The men themselves, miserably and criminally enervated and corrupted, are present for all to see. Let them try, if they can, to persuade anyone that such men minister to any holy purpose. Yet, it is undeniable that they are numbered with those who live within the sacred precincts. If we are ignorant of what is done, we know by whom it is done. We know that on the stage, at least, no one ever heard of a eunuch or pervert taking part even in a chorus of harlots—though, of course, shady characters do play such parts, since no good man could do it with a clean conscience. What, then, are we to think of the 'sacredness' of sacred rites which employ such ministers as are too depraved to be admitted to the indecencies on the stage.

Chapter 8

All such stories are to be interpreted, so we are told, in terms of physical or natural phenomena. That is beside the point. We are here discussing the nature of God or theology, not the nature of the world or physics. It is true that the true God is by nature God and not merely God in virtue of human opinion, but it does not follow that every nature is divine. Certainly, every man and beast, every tree and stone has a nature, but not one of them is divine. If, when there is question of the mysteries of the Mother of the gods, the sum and substance of this 'natural' interpretation is that the earth is the 'mother of the gods,' then what is the point of pursuing the matter; why push the enquiry further?

This is the very best argument in favor of those who hold that all of the gods are men. They are children of the earth, in the sense that the earth is their mother. But, in genuine theology, the earth is the work of God, not the mother of God. In any case, however they interpret the mysteries in terms of the phenomena of nature, it is certainly not according to nature, but clean against it, for men to play the sexual role of women. This crime, dishonor, and disease, which even vicious men are ashamed to confess even under torture, is openly admitted in the mysteries.

Let us suppose that the mysteries, which everyone admits are more indecent than the dirtiest shows, can be explained away by the excuse that they are mere symbols of natural phenomena. What, then, is to prevent the myths of the poets from being justified in the same way? The fact is that many myths have been so explained. Take the most horrible and unmentionable of all the myths, that of Saturn devouring his children. Many interpret this to mean that Time—which is but another name for Saturn—devours all that it brings forth;

or, as Varro puts it, the same Saturn is linked with seeds,[1] which go back to the earth from which they come. And so on; and so with other myths.

This so-called mythical theology, along with all the interpretations, is reprehended, rejected, and attacked both by the natural theology of the philosophers and by the political theology with which we are dealing and which is said to be the theology of people in the cities. Mythical theology is accused of inventing unbecoming stories about the gods and is judged worthy of rejection. But, there is here a trick of the sharp-witted scholars who launched the attack. Their idea was that both the poetical and political systems were open to attack; they had the courage to attack the one, but not the other. So, they openly attacked the system of the poets, while they merely exposed the political theology in a way to bring out its similarity to the other. Not that they wanted the political to be accepted in preference to the other, but rather that both should be rejected together. They wanted the best minds to despise the other systems and accept what they called natural theology, without imposing any risk on those who were afraid to attack the political theology openly. In reality, both the political and the poetical systems are equally mythical and equally political. Anyone who takes the trouble to study their inanities and obscenities will find them equally fanciful; and anyone who will notice that the comic scenes in use in the festivals of the state gods and in the public worship of the cities are borrowed from the theology of the poets will realize that both systems are political.

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1 . . . *quod pertineat Saturnus ad semina.* Varro's own words (*De lingua latina* 5.64) are: *ab satu est dictus Saturnus.* Saturn, the Sower, was linked with the Greek God Krónos and so identified with Time (Greek, *chronos*).

How, then, can the power of giving eternal life be attributed to any of the gods whose images and mysteries are enough to show that they are all one with the mythical gods which are openly wicked. From all such indications as their shape, age, sex, apparel, marriage, children, and the worship paid them, it is clear that they were human beings who had rites and solemnities instituted to honor something in their lives or death —the demons being delighted that such errors should take root and grow. Or, at any rate, it was unclean spirits who used some such occasion to worm their way into the minds of men in order to deceive them.

Chapter 9

To return, now, to a matter about which I have already said a good deal, but by no means all—the silly and minute division of labor according to which each of the gods is to be supplicated only in the field of his particular function. Does not all this savor rather of the buffoonery of the stage than of the majesty of God? Just imagine anyone hiring two nurses for his child, one to do nothing but give it food, the other to give it only drink—just as the two goddesses were employed, Educa for eating and Potina for drinking! Why, the whole thing would be taken for a farce or a practical joke.

Bacchus is said to have been called Liber from 'liberation,' on the ground that men have to thank him for the release that comes with seminal emission. Libera or Venus, as she is thought to be, is supposed to do the same service for women —since she, too, they assure us, suffers emissions. It is to honor Bacchus and Venus that male and female members are said to be placed in the temples; and, as stimulants to lust, women and wine are associated with Bacchus. Hence, the wild Bacchanalian orgies—in which, as even Varro confesses, not

even the Bacchantes could do what they do unless they were out of their mind.

These orgies were later abolished by the vote of a saner Senate. It seems as though they learned at last what havoc can be wrought in the minds of men when evil spirits are mistaken for gods. Certainly, nothing of the sort ever occurred in the theatres, where there may have been inanity but not insanity.[1] However, it is not far from insanity to have for gods beings that can enjoy such inanity.

Varro makes a distinction between the religious and the superstitious man. He says that the gods are feared by the superstitious man, but by the religious man they are reverenced like parents, and not feared like enemies. He also claims that all of the gods are so benevolent that they would rather spare a wicked than harm an innocent man. Nevertheless, he admits that, in order to prevent the god Silvanus coming at night to molest a woman after her child has been born, three gods are assigned to guard her, and that, as a symbol of the divine custodians, three men go around to watch the entrances of the house by night. They first strike the threshold with an axe, then with a pestle, and finally sweep it with a brush, the idea being that with such symbols of country life Silvanus will be kept out: the axe being necessary in cutting down and pruning trees, the pestle in the grinding of grain, and the broom in making heaps of fruit. Three gods take their names from these articles—Intercidona from the cutting of the axe, Pilumnus from the pestle and Deverra from the broom for sweeping [*verrere*]—and by these three gods new-born children are saved from the power of Silvanus. It appears, therefore, as though the guardianship of the gods would not pre-

1 . . . *ludunt* . . . *furiunt.*

vail against the savagery of one evil god unless they were three to one and unless they opposed the rough, tough, and unkempt god of the woods with symbols of cultivation. Does this appear as though the gods were harmless and peaceful? If these are the guardian gods of cities, are they not more ridiculous than the clowning gods on the stage?

When a boy and girl get married, the god Jugatinus—God help us!—is at hand. But then the god Domiducus is needed to lead the lady home, and Domitius to help her into the house; and to keep her at home with her husband, the goddess Manturna is thrown in. More could be added, but modesty forbids. We may leave the rest to flesh and blood, veiled with secrecy and shame.

Why do they fill the house with a crowd of gods even when the friends have departed? Not that the thought of their presence may be any help to modesty, but simply that the girl, weak, puzzled and shy, may the more easily, with the help of these gods, have her maidenhood taken from her. There in the crowd of gods and goddesses are Virginiensis, and father Subigus, and Mother Prema, and Pertunda, and Venus, and Priapus. Is that kind of a task, then, really so hard for a man that he needs to be helped by the gods? And, if so, wouldn't one god or one goddess be enough? Wouldn't Venus all by herself be enough? Doesn't Venus get her name because it takes some violence to un-virgin a wife?

If men and women have any of that shame which, apparently, is lacking in the gods, and if they believe that all these gods and goddesses are with them and at work with them, are not husband and wife so mortified that he becomes less ready and she more reluctant for the union? But, if the goddess Virginiensis is needed to remove the girdle, and the god Subigus to place the wife in position, and the goddess

Prema to keep her from moving, what in the world has the goddess Pertunda to do? Let her blush and get out; let the husband have something to do. It would be highly improper for anyone but him to perform the action suggested by Pertunda's name.[2] Well, at any rate, she is a goddess and not a god. For, if Pertundus were the name and he was thought to be a man, the husband would have more need to ask help against him in defense of his wife, than to ask help against Silvanus when the child was born. And what is to be said of the presence of Priapus—a male, and something more! It was on his monstrous and unmentionable member that, according to the very best and most pious tradition of pagan matrons, every newly married bride was obliged to sit.

But let them go on, with all the subtlety they can, trying to make distinctions between political and poetical theology, between cities and theatres, temples and stages, the sanctities of the priests and the songs of the poets, as though they were distinguishing things decent from indecent, true from false, important from trivial, serious from silly, desirable from objectionable. I understand what they are up to. They know perfectly well that theatrical and mythical theology lean on that which is political, and that this is revealed in the poets' songs as in a mirror. Yet, they dare not condemn the political theology. While they are exposing it, they feel free to condemn and demolish the image in the mirror, hoping that those who know what they are up to will have a horror, not only of the image, but of the face itself.

In the meantime, the gods themselves fall in love with the picture of themselves which they see in the mirror. Thus, from the two theologies, it is easy to see who and what they are.

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2 Latin, *pertundere,* to perforate.

They have compelled their worshipers with fearful threats: first, to offer them the filth of the fabulous theology; second, to parade them in civic processions; third, to regard them as divinities. They could not have given a better proof that they were nothing but unclean spirits. At the same time, they have so integrated the lowly and reprobate theology of the stage with the lofty and approved theology of the state that, filthy and false and full of fictitious gods as this theological synthesis is, one element is taken from the books of the priests and the other from the songs of the poets.

Whether there are other parts, too, is another question. For the moment, I have sufficiently shown, I think, that both the so-called political and poetical theologies—to use the distinction of Varro—belong to one and the same theology of the state. Both are equally indecent, absurd, unbecoming, and false, and it would therefore, be folly for religious persons to hope for eternal life from either the one or the other.

It must also be noted that Varro himself has composed a catalogue of gods, beginning with Janus (who is linked with human conception) and continuing with gods who correspond with each stage of life up to decrepitude and death. The list closes with the goddess Nenia, who is hailed with song at old men's funerals. After this list, he has a second, showing the gods who are in charge, not of man himself, but of human belongings, such as food, clothing, and other necessities of life. He assigns a function for each and names the favors for which each should be asked. But, in all his carefully compiled catalogue, he does not point out and name a single god who is to be asked for the grace of eternal life—which, of course, is the sole purpose of being a Christian.

Surely, therefore, no one is so stupid as not to understand Varro's real purpose in giving such a complete and careful

exposition of political theology and in showing its similarity to one that is fictitious, unworthy, and immoral, at the same time, broadly hinting that the latter was a part of the former. Obviously, he wanted to make an opening in men's mind for that theology of nature which, as he says, is the construction of philosophers. His method was subtle. While he openly attacks the theology of the poets, he does not dare attack that of the priests. Yet, this exposition is an exposé.[3] Thus, both systems are rejected, and there is nothing left for men who can think but to choose the theology of the philosophers. With the help of the true God, I shall deal with this in its proper place.

Chapter 10

The freedom of speech which Varro lacked when he feared to attack the theology of the state as openly as he attacked the theology of the stage, though both were alike, was found, not perfectly, but in part, in Annaeus Seneca.[1] We have some evidence to show that he was at the height of his fame in the days of the Apostles. However, he was more free with his pen than in the way he behaved. In a book he wrote, *An Attack on Superstition*,[2] he is much more full and forceful in his criticism of the theology of the city and state than Varro is in his criticism of that of mythology and the stage.

Thus, speaking of idols, he writes: 'Of the cheapest and most lifeless matter they make, by a dedication, inviolable and immortal divinities. They give them the outward appearance of men, wild beasts, or fish; sometimes, with double sex and multiple bodies. Monstrous shapes that would frighten us to

3 . . . *prodendo reprehensibilem ostendat.*

1 Cf. Book V, Ch. 8.
2 *De superstitione* is now lost.

death if we met them alive are called divinities.' A little later, in his account of natural theology, he summarizes the views of a number of philosophers and then offers this objection: 'Here, someone asks: Am I to believe that the heaven and earth are gods, and that some gods are above the moon and some below it? Am I to put up with either Plato or the Peripatetic Strato,[3] either with the view that God has no body or with the view that God has no soul?' Seneca's answer is as follows: 'In the long run, whose dreams are nearest the truth, those of Titus Tatius or those of Romulus or those of Tullus Hostilius? Tatius found a goddess, Cloacina, in the sewers; Romulus, gods in the rivers—Picus and Tiberinus; Hostilius, in the most disagreeable of men's emotions—Pavor in the agitation of a frightened soul, Pallor in a change of color just short of a bodily sickness. Why not take these for divinities and find a place for them in heaven?'

Seneca has something to say of the brutal and beastly rites. And how he speaks his mind! 'Here is a worshiper who unsexes himself; here is another slashing his arms with a knife. What room is left for reverence, when love is shown like this. Gods that want this kind of worship should be given none at all. So great is the frenzy of mind disturbed and beside itself that gods are worshiped in a way that not even the most savage men of the most fabulous cruelty vent their rage. There have been tyrants who have tortured people, but none who ordered men to torture themselves. Men have been unsexed to gratify royal lust, but no one has ever been ordered by any tyrant to mutilate himself. Yet, in the temples of the gods, men lacerate their own flesh; they offer up in sacrifice the blood from their own wounds. Anyone who will take time off

3 Strato Physicus (i.e., the Scientist) became head of the Peripatetic school of philosophy in 288 B.C.

to see what they do and suffer will find things so contrary to self-respect, so unbecoming an educated man, so unlike normal behavior, that he would undoubtedly think these men mad—if mad men were still in the minority; but, today, with so many insane, we must call them normal.'

He gives an account of what takes place in the very Capitol and with the utmost frankness condemns it. No one could believe these things are done by anyone except in mockery or madness. He makes great fun of the fact that in the Egyptian mysteries there is much moaning when Osiris is lost and great rejoicing when he is found, because, although the losing and finding are purely imaginary, the grief and joy of the people who have lost nothing and found nothing is perfectly genuine. Then, he continues: 'It must be admitted that there is a time fixed for this folly. Perhaps it is tolerable to go mad once in the year. Just go as far as the Capitol. You will be ashamed of the public exhibition of insanity and the fact that it calls itself worship. One person is reading off names to a god; a second is telling Jupiter the time of the day. Here is a man behaving like a policeman, and there a fellow who thinks he is a trainer and is giving a rub-down to an athlete who is not there.

'There are women who imagine they are hairdressers, combing the hair of Juno and Minerva—though they are nowhere near the temple, let alone their statues. Near them are others holding a mirror. Here is a group asking the gods to stand bail for them; there, some lawyers offering their briefs and showing them how to conduct their case. There was once a star comedian, well-trained, but now old and decrepit, who used to go through one of his parts every day in the temple—as though the gods would enjoy what men had long been tired of. Every sort of craftsman is there lazily

doing a job for the immortal gods.' A little later, he adds: 'It can at least be said of them that, useless as their service may be, what they are offering to the god is neither indecent nor unbecoming. Certain old hags sit in the Capitol thinking that Jove is in love with them, but they have nothing to fear from the angry jealousy of Juno of which the poets have told us so much.'

Varro had none of this outspokenness. At most, he was bold enough to criticize the theology of the poets, but never the state worship of which Seneca makes such mincemeat. Yet, if the truth must be told, temples where these things are done are worse than theatres where they are merely put on as shows. Seneca took the stand, in regard to the mysteries of the state religion, that it was the part of a wise man to go through with them like an actor, but to give them no allegiance of the heart. His words are: 'A wise man will observe all these things, as being commanded by the law, not as being pleasing to the gods.' He adds, a little later: 'Little good can be said of the marriages of the gods, least of all when we make the unnatural unions of brothers as sisters—Bellona and Mars, Vulcan and Venus, Neptune and Salacia. We leave a few of them unmarried, as though no one had proposed to them—which does not surprise me when I think especially of such widows as Populonia and Fulgora and the goddess Rumina. This whole ignoble mass of divinities has been heaped together over a long period by unending superstition. We shall worship them, but we shall never forget that the cult is a mere convention, not a conviction.'[4] His idea was that neither the laws nor custom had put anything into the state religion which was either pleasing to the gods or based on truth.

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4 . . . *magis ad morem quam ad rem pertinere.*

Nevertheless, the man whom philosophers thought to be so outspoken behaved like the illustrious Senator of the people of Rome that he was. He worshiped what he reprehended; he did what he derided; he adored what he deplored. Philosophy, I suppose, had taught him one great truth: that he must never believe from a motive of superstition, although, to obey the laws of the state and observe the conventions of men, he might play the role of an actor—never, indeed, in a theatre but, at least, in a temple. The worst of it is that the lie he acted was acted so well that the people believed that he was not acting at all. For, a true actor would, at least, prefer to amuse us by playing a part than bemuse us by playing a lie.

Chapter 11

Seneca included among the other reprehensible superstitions of political theology the sacred institutions of the Hebrews, especially their Sabbaths. The Jews, he said, served no good purpose by resting every seventh day, since they lost nearly a seventh part of their whole lives and must neglect many matters calling for immediate attention. His attitude toward the Christians was neutral, although they were then much hated by the Jews. He did not dare to praise them counter to the established tradition of his country, or, so it would seem, to condemn them counter to his conscience.

He writes as follows in regard to the Hebrews: 'The ways of those dreadful people have taken deeper and deeper root and are spreading throughout the whole world. They have imposed their customs on their conquerors.' There is a note of wonder in these words, and, little as he knew it, a movement of grace inspired him to add, in plain words, what he thought of the true character of those institutions. He says: 'The Jewish people know the reason for all their rites, but

most of our people merely go through the motions, without knowing why.'

In regard to the tradition of the Jews, I must discuss, in a later part of this work certain points which I have touched on elsewhere, particularly in my debates with the Manichaeans: Why and how far these rites were instituted by divine authority, and, later, after the people of God had been given the revelation of the mystery of eternal life, at the proper time and by the same authority, why they were abrogated.

Chapter 12

We have now seen that there are three kinds of theology, called by the Greeks mythical, physical, and political, and which may be called in Latin fabulous, natural, and civil. And we have seen that there is no hope of eternal life to be derived either from the fabulous system, which even the worshipers of the many false gods openly criticize, or from the civil, which includes the fabulous as one of its parts and which is like, or even worse than, the part. If any reader feels that enough has not been said on these points in the present Book, let him read what has been written above, particularly in Book IV on God as the Giver of happiness.

For, to whom—if not to Felicity alone—should men who want eternal life dedicate themselves, if, indeed, Felicity were divine. But, since happiness is not a goddess, but a gift of God, to what God save the Giver of happiness should we consecrate ourselves? For, we love with religious charity that eternal life where there is a true and complete beatitude. I think, from what I have said so far, that no one can imagine that the Giver of happiness is any of those gods who are worshiped with such indecent rites, and are more indecently angry

when they are not so worshiped, and who thus show themselves to be nothing but unclean spirits.

Further, how could anyone give us eternal life who cannot even make us happy? And, by eternal life I mean a life where there is happiness without end. For, if a soul lives in eternal pains, in which those unclean spirits are to be punished, that is eternal death rather than eternal life. There can be no greater or worse death than where death itself never dies. Since it is the nature of the soul that it cannot be without some sort of life, having been created immortal, it is the depth of death for it to be alienated from the life of God in an eternity of pain. Of eternal life, that is to say, of life that is happy without end, only He is the Giver who gives genuine beatitude. This is something which, as has been shown, those gods who are worshiped in accordance with the theology of the state cannot give. And, therefore, it is useless to worship them with a view to temporal and terrestrial benefits (as I have shown in the previous five Books) and still more useless to worship them with a view to eternal life which begins after death (as I have shown in this Book—with supporting arguments from the others). However, old habits have deep roots, and there may be some who feel I have said too little to convince them to disavow and give up this way of worship. I must commend to their attention a subsequent Book which, with the help of God, I hope to join to this one.

BOOK VII

Preface

I HAVE BEEN TRYING to the best of my power to root out and get rid of those depraved and inveterate opinions which, by a long-lasting error of mankind, have taken such deep and tenacious roots in unenlightened minds, and which are so opposed to religious truth. Only the true God can effect such a purpose; I have been trying to cooperate, in however small a degree, with Him and with His grace. I know that many whose minds are keener will feel that what I have written is more than enough for the purpose, but I must ask them to bear with me a little longer and, for the sake of others, not to think superfluous what they do not need themselves.

The issue at stake is very great. What I want to bring out is that, although we depend on the true and truly holy Divinity for such things as are needed to support our weakness in this present life, nevertheless, we should not seek and worship God for the sake of the passing cloud of this mortal life, but for the sake of that happy life which cannot be other than everlasting.

Chapter 1

I have tried to show that divinity is not to be found in the theology which is called political and which is expounded in

the sixteen volumes of Marcus Varro. I might have used the word 'deity' instead of divinity, since the purists are no longer disturbed by a word which seems a better translation of the Greek *theótes*. In any case, my point has been that it is impossible to reach the blessedness of eternal life by the worship of such gods as have been offered to our worship by the institution of a state. If Book VI has failed to bring conviction in this matter, I hope that, when the reader has finished the present Book, he will feel that no objection has been left unanswered.

A first objection. Perhaps it is possible for someone to believe that, at least, the 'select and principal gods,' of which I have said so little, but to which Varro devotes his entire last volume, should be worshiped with a view to that happy life which by its nature is eternal. I might be tempted to answer this, perhaps more wittily than wisely, in the words of Tertullian: 'If gods are selected like onions, some of them must be bad.'[1] I prefer not to say this. I can see that, even after a selection has been made, some are picked out from those selected for functions of greater moment. For example, in the army, after the recruits have been selected, some are chosen for some special feat of arms. So, too, in the Church, when there is an election, some are put in charge without any reflection on the others, since all the faithful are properly spoken of as 'elect.'

So, too, in building, we select corner stones without thinking any worse of the rest of the stones which are used in other parts of the building. We select grapes for eating without rejecting the others we set aside for making wine. There is no need of illustrating further what is obvious. There is no

1 Quoting from memory a phrase in Tertullian's *Ad nationes* 2.

reason, therefore, to blame either the writer or the worshipers or the gods themselves just because out of many gods some have been selected. But, the question to be asked is: Who are the select gods, and for what purpose have they been selected?

Chapter 2

The following are the names of the select gods which Varro describes within the compass of a single book: Janus, Jupiter, Saturn, Genius, Mercury, Apollo, Mars, Vulcan, Neptune, Sol, Orcus, Father Bacchus, Tellus, Ceres, Juno, Luna, Diana, Minerva, Venus, Vesta. Of these twenty, twelve are males and eight are females.

The first question is whether these divinities have been called 'select' because of their great functions in the universe, or because they are better known to the people and, therefore, given wider worship. If, as a fact, they have higher functions in the running of the cosmos, we should not have to look for them among that plebeian multitude of minor gods who are deputed for tasks of no significance.

Yet, to begin with, just take Janus. At the moment of conception, he is given the task of opening the door of the womb for the seed to enter; and that is only the first of a long list of tiny tasks assigned to minor divinities. So, too, Saturn is on the scene, since Saturn has something to do with seed. Bacchus (Liber) takes care of the sense of release [*liberat*] after semination, and Libera (which is but another name for Venus) does for the wife the same service that Liber does for the husband. Yet, all of these are among the gods which are called 'select.' Surely, Mena, the goddess in charge of menstruation, can hardly be called noble in spite of being the daughter of Jupiter. Juno, herself, who is the Queen of the

select gods, is assigned by Varro (in his book on the select gods) to this same field of the menstrual flux. Under the name of Juno Lucina, she is set over this same task along with her stepdaughter Mena.

In this generative process there are two highly obscure divinities, Vitumnus and Sentinus. The one is assigned to give life to the fetus; the other gives the first capacity for sensation. But, lowly as these gods are, their functions are surely much more significant than those of many of the well-known, select divinities. For, without life and feeling, in what sense is that whole mass in the womb any better than the nastiest kind of slime and dirt?

Chapter 3

How, then, can we explain that so many of the select gods have been set to these insignificant functions in which they are outclassed by the munificence of those two gods, unknown to fame,[1] whose names are Vitumnus and Sentinus? The select god Janus provides nothing but an entrance, a doorway [*janua*], so to speak, for the seed; the select god Saturn provides the seed; the select god Liber provides the male emission and Libera (or Ceres or Venus) the female ovulation; the select Juno—and not by herself but along with Mena, the daughter of Jupiter—provides the menstrual flow to help the growth of the fetus. But, it is the unknown and lowly Vitumnus who provides life, and the unknown and lowly Sentinus who provides the power to feel—the two endowments which are as much higher than all those others as they are lower than intelligence and reason.

Just as beings that can think and reason are higher than

1 St. Augustine uses the Virgilian phrase, *quos fama obscura recondit* (*Aeneid* 5.520).

those which, like beasts, merely live and feel without thinking and reasoning, so beings endowed with life and sensation are rightly ranked higher than those which are neither alive nor have power to feel. They ought, therefore, to have ranked the life-giving Vitumnus and the sense-conferring Sentinus higher among the select gods than Janus the receiver or Saturn the giver or sower [*sator*] of seed, and higher than Liber and Libera, the movers or emitters of seed. The fact is that no one would give a fig for such seed unless it were meant to be given life and sensation. Yet these really 'select' endowments are not conferred by select gods, but by gods who are hardly known and who, considering the dignity of their duties, are disregarded.

It is no answer to say that it is because Janus has power over all beginnings whatsoever that even the beginning of conception must be attributed to him; or that, because Saturn has power over all seed, even human semination may not be dissociated from his operations; or that Bacchus and Venus are linked with human reproduction because they have power over the sending forth of all seed; or that it is only because Juno presides over all purifications and germinations that she must play a part in menstrual flux and birth.

Those who give such an answer should be consistent. They should admit that Vitumnus and Sentinus have power over all beings whatsoever that have life and feeling! And, if they make this admission, they must reflect on how lofty is the place they are assigning to Vitumnus and Sentinus. For, to be born of seed is of the earth, earthy; but to live and feel links one with the gods in the stars. And, if anyone objects that the only life and sensation ascribed to Vitumnus and Sentinus are such as we find in flesh, it may be asked, in reply, why the giving of life and feeling to flesh should not be attributed to

the god who makes all things live and feel and who, as a part of his universal task, linked this gift with birth? In that case, why do we need Vitumnus and Sentinus at all?

But, it may be objected, we ought to suppose that these fleshy tasks, being last and lowest in dignity, were committed by the divinity who presides over all life and feeling to these lesser gods, as to servants. In reply, I should ask: Are, then, the select gods so lacking in servants that they, in turn, could find no one to whom to commit these commissions? Were they compelled, with all the dignity that got them selected, to collaborate with lesser gods? Take Juno. She is not only a select divinity, but a queen and the 'sister and spouse'[2] of Jupiter. Yet, she is just Iterduca to young people and she does her work along with two very minor goddesses, Abeona and Adeona.

Speaking of the gods of the young, there is the goddess Mens, who is supposed to give children a good head. Is there any greater human endowment than to have a good head? Yet, Mens is not among the select divinities, whereas Juno is select because Juno is Iterduca and Domiduca—as though either taking a trip [*iter*] or getting home [*domus*] is worth the trouble if one does not have a good head. The selectors of the select divinities never thought of selecting the goddess of good heads. Mens was certainly a better choice than Minerva, who, in the divine division of tiny tasks, was given charge of children's memory. Surely, having a good head is better than having even a prodigious memory. A good head and bad morals never go together, whereas a fair number of villains have had marvelous memories, and they have been all the worse for being unable to forget their wicked intentions.

2 Virgil's expression, *et soror et coniunx* (*Aeneid* 1.47).

Yet, Minerva is among the select gods, while the goddess Mens is hidden away under a heap of minor divinities. The same is true of the goddess Virtue and the goddess Felicity. I have said a word about both of these in Book IV. They had been reckoned as divine, but have been given no place among the select gods, where place was found for Mars and Orcus, the one a sower, the other a reaper, of death.

Thus, it is obvious that, in these minute functions which have been distributed so meticulously to a multitude of gods, even the select gods work somewhat like a Senate collaborating with ordinary citizens. We find, in fact, that many gods who were never thought of for selection have the administration of a number of functions which are higher than those assigned to the select gods. The conclusion would seem to be that the select and major gods are given this name, not because their functions in the world are more important, but because they happened to become better known to the people. This explains the remarks of Varro himself, that many gods who were mothers and fathers, like parents on earth, rank below their offspring in nobility.

Hence, a plausible reason why Felicity has no right to be ranked as a select divinity is that such gods reached this distinction by fortune and not by merit. What, then, of the goddess Fortune? She should surely rank with, or even outrank, the others, for they say she is the goddess who distributes her favors, not in virtue of any rational plan, but by pure and simple accident. She should have the highest place among the select gods, who are the best illustrations of her power, since they were selected, not because of any virtue of their own or any rational right to happiness, but purely by the power of Fortune—a power which her own worshipers reckon as irrational.

Even the brilliant writer Sallust had an eye on the gods when he said: 'There is nothing that escapes the rule of Fortune—a force that brings by whim and not by worth celebrity or obscurity.'[3] Certainly, there is no reason why Venus should be kept in the light while Virtue is left in the shade. The divinity of both Venus and Virtue has been admitted, yet there is no comparison between their respective worth.

It cannot be argued that fame is the reward of popular appeal and that Venus is more in demand than Virtus. If this were so, why is Minerva famous and Pecunia, the goddess of gold, left without a temple. Certainly, among men, more are drawn by the greed for gold than by love of wisdom. Even among the great craftsmen, very few fail to set a price on what they produce, and, of course, the end is always worth more than the means. If, then, the selection of the gods were made by the thoughtless masses, why was not the goddess of gold put above Minerva, the goddess of wisdom, since gold was the end and craftsmanship only the means? On the other hand, if the reckoning of rank is the work of the few wise men, why is not Virtue preferred to Venus? Certainly, she is much preferred by reason.

At any rate, as I have said already, Fortune should have had a high place among the select gods. Those who esteem her most think that luck plays an important part in everything, and that Fortune confers fame or obscurity by her whim rather than by obvious worth. This seems true even for the gods. She made them famous or obscure as she liked, which is to say, by luck. Her power was never more in evidence than in the selection of the select gods. Perhaps, then, to explain why Fortune herself was not selected, we must

3 *Catilina* 8.

suppose that the only kind of luck that Fortune ever had was bad luck! In that case, she was her own worst enemy, making others famous and missing fame herself.

Chapter 4

If only the select gods had been elected to honor and not to infamy, they would have been congratulated and called blest by all who appreciate fame and distinction. Actually, it was the mass of lesser gods who escaped opprobrium, sheltered as they were by their obscurity. We may laugh at them when we think of them portioned out, by the figments of men's fancies, into a multitude of minor functions, like the sub-sub-farmers of taxes or the specialists in Silversmith Lane, where a cup that could be made by a single worker passes through the hands of a dozen. (This human division of labor was devised for the sake of the workers. It was easier and quicker for each to learn a single operation in the craft, whereas it would be a slow and difficult task if each worker had to become perfect in the whole work.) I said we may laugh at the 'unselected' gods; on the other hand, there is hardly one of them who has brought on himself a reputation of being disreputable, while there is hardly a single one of the select gods who has not been branded with the mark of public reprobation. While the lofty gods had to descend to the lowly tasks of the lesser gods, the lowly gods never climbed to the lofty infamy of the elect.

For the moment, I do not recall any particular shame attaching to the name of Janus. For all I know, he may have lived in innocence, far removed from public crime and private sin. He kindly offered hospitality to Saturn and shared his kingdom with his exiled guest, each of them building a city for himself, namely Janiculum and Saturnia. Unfortu-

nately, those who insist on ugliness in the worship of the gods, finding no turpitude in the life of Janus, put it into his statues. They sometimes make him into a monstrosity with two faces, sometimes with four faces. He is made to look like a pair of twins. I sometimes wonder whether their idea was that, just as the select gods made up in shamelessness what they lacked in shamefacedness [*frontem*], so Janus should make up in 'sham-facedness' [*frontosior*] what he lacked in shamelessness.'[1]

Chapter 5

We must now turn to those naturalist interpretations by which the pagans seek to hide the disgrace of their low error under the appearance of a high doctrine. Varro's first intimation of these interpretations is when he says that the ancients made images, insignia, and ornaments of the gods so that those who looked at them in the light of a doctrine for initiates[1] could see with their mind and contemplate the soul of the world and all its parts, that is to say, the true gods. When pagans made images of the gods that looked like men their idea was that the spirit of mortals which is in the human body is very like the spirit which is immortal. It is much the same as when vessels are set out to symbolize gods and when a wine jug is placed in the temple of Bacchus to signify wine. The container symbolizes what it contained. So, too, by means of an image with a human form, the rational soul can be symbolized, since by nature it is contained in a body as in a

1 . . . *quoniam plurimi di selecti erubescenda perpetrando amiserant* frontem, *quanto iste innocentior esset, tanto* frontosior *appareret. Frons* means both a forehead (and so, face) and shamefacedness.

1 *Doctrinae mysteria.*

vessel, and they imply that god (or the gods) is of the same nature as a rational soul. Such are the mysteries (or the doctrines of the initiates) which our learned Varro penetrated and which he brings out into the light for the rest of men.

But, surely, we must appeal from the intelligence of Varro, intoxicated by esotericism, to the sober prudence of his ordinary insight,[2] as when he admits, first, that those who first set up images of the gods for the people 'took away their fear but added to their error,'[3] and, second, that the ancient Romans had a purer reverence for the gods when they had no images. These were his authorities for daring to speak against the later Romans. For, likely enough, if the early Romans had worshiped images, Varro would have been too afraid to mention the feeling against setting up images—true as that fact was—and his account of the dangerous and empty figments of this esoteric doctrine would have been more lengthy and lofty than ever.

Poor man! His spirit so acute and cultivated failed to pierce through the esoteric doctrines to the true God, by whom, and not with whom, that spirit was made, and of whom it was a creature, not a part. That God is not the soul of all things but the maker of all souls; by His light alone the soul can be happy, if it is not ungrateful for His grace.

The following pages reveal what those esoteric doctrines are and what they are worth. In the meantime, this great scholar professes to believe that the soul and the elements of the universe are the true gods. Thus, it is clear that within the scope of his theology, that is to say, the natural theology to which he gives the palm, a place could be found for the

2 *Sed, o homo acutissime, num in istis doctrinae mysteriis illam prudentiam perdidisti, qua tibi sobrie visum est . . .*
3 Cf. Book IV, Ch. 31.

nature of the rational soul. Actually, he says very little about natural theology in his last book dealing with the select gods; but from it we shall be able to see whether it is possible, by means of naturalist interpretations, to bring the state religion into accord with natural theology. For, if that should be possible, all theology will be natural. In that case, why all the need to distinguish with such care political theology from natural theology? If, however, the distinction is valid, not even the natural theology, which he likes so much, is true, for the reason that it reaches only as far as the soul, but not as far as the true God, who made the soul. And, if natural theology is not true, then the political is of still less value and even falser, since it deals more with merely corporeal natures. This is clear from the interpretations which were so beautifully and clearly elaborated. Some of these I must deal with now.

Chapter 6

In his preface on natural theology, Varro says that he holds that God is the soul of the universe or cosmos (to use the Greek word) and that the cosmos itself is God. Yet, just as we call a wise man wise in virtue of his soul, although he is composed of both body and soul, so Varro calls the universe divine in virtue of its soul, although the cosmos is made up of a body and soul.

Here, Varro seems, in some way, to admit that there is one God, but, in order to bring in many gods, he adds that the cosmos is divided into two parts—the heavens and the earth—and that the heavens, in turn, are divided into two parts—the ether and the air. So, too, the earth is divided into two parts —water and land. The highest of all these parts is the ether; the next is the air; the third is water; the lowest is the earth.

All these four parts are permeated with souls, which are immortal souls in the ether and the air, and are mortal souls in water and land.

From the highest circle of the heavens down to the circle of the moon, the planets, and stars are ethereal souls. These celestial gods are objects, not merely of thought, but of our eyes. Between the circle of the moon and that of the highest cloud and the winds, the soul is aerial, and it can be seen with the mind only, not with the eyes. These souls are called heroes, lares, genii. This is a brief summary of his preface on natural theology. It satisfied many other philosophers besides Varro. All this I must discuss at some length as soon as, with God's help, I shall have finished dealing with the select gods —which still are a part of political theology.

Chapter 7

Varro begins with Janus. Who is Janus? Janus is the cosmos. No one can complain of the brevity and clarity of that answer. But, why are all beginnings said to belong to Janus and all endings to another god whose name is Terminus? It was to these two gods that the months of January and February were dedicated, when they were added to the original ten, beginning in March and ending in December. Hence, they say, the festival Terminalia[1] is celebrated in February, which gets its name from Februm, the sacred purification.

Are we to say, then, that the beginnings of things belong to the universe or to Janus and that the endings do not belong to him, so that a second god has to be put in charge of these? Why, then, do we admit that all the things that are said to begin in the cosmos end there also? And, if only half the work

1 Celebrated on February 23.

is done by Janus, what is the use of giving him two faces on his statues? Surely, they would have a neater interpretation of the two-faced god if they called him both Janus and Terminus and linked one of the faces with beginnings and the other with endings. Anyone who has a work to do must keep these both in view. Wherever there is motion, one must look to the beginnings of the action if one is to foresee the end. That is why an intention looking to the future must be connected with a memory looking to the past. For, no one can finish what he has forgotten that he began.

It is possible that they gave to Janus only the power over beginnings because they held that the happy life began in this world but could only be perfected beyond it. But, in that case, they would have put Terminus before Janus and would not have excluded him from the select gods. In any case, even as things are, with the beginnings and endings of purely temporal things being represented by these two gods, more honor was due to Terminus. There is more joy whenever a thing is finished; whereas beginnings are fraught with worry until the end is reached. When we make a beginning, it is the ending which we seek, intend, expect, and long for. There is never joy until a thing begun is ended.

Chapter 8

Varro offers us an interpretation of the double-faced image of Janus. The reason, they say, for the two faces, one in front and one behind, is that the shape of the mouth when fully opened is round like the world. Curiously enough, the Greek word for heaven (*ouranòs*) also means the roof of the mouth; and a few of the Latin poets, Varro tells us, spoke of the ceiling of the heavens as a 'palate'; and from the globe of the mouth there is one way to the outside by way of the teeth and another way to the inside by way of the throat. To such straits

has our universe been brought because of a Greek and poetical meaning of 'palate!'

What has all that to do with the soul or with life everlasting? Here is a god to be cherished because of our spittle, for which, under the heaven of our palate, he has provided a double door, one for spitting and one for swallowing saliva! Could anything be more absurd? First of all, there are not two doors opposite each other in the universe for taking in and getting rid of anything. Further the universe is not really like our mouth and throat. Yet, because of our palate, Janus is a symbol of the universe! Then the pagans call Janus double-faced and give him four faces, and interpret these as the four quarters of the universe—as though the cosmos looked out on something outside of it as Janus looks out from his four faces!

Now, if Janus is the universe and this has four parts, then the image of Janus with two faces is a falsification. They answer that the image is all right because the whole world is included when one says East and West. But we also cover the whole world when we say North and South. Is anyone, therefore, likely to call the world two-faced because they call the four-faced Janus double-faced? They may have found something in the mouth of a man to justify the interpretation of the double-faced Janus as a symbol of the universe. But, there is surely nothing in the world corresponding to four doors (*januae*) for things to go in and go out—unless, of course, Neptune should turn up and hand us a fish which has a couple of fins, one on the right and one on the left, in addition to the front and the back of the mouth!

The fact is that, for all these doors, no soul can escape inanity of this sort unless it listens to the Truth which says: 'I am the door'[1] [*janua*].

1 John 10.9.

Chapter 9

Now let us hear what the pagans understand by Jove or Jupiter, as he is called. He is the god, they tell us, who has power over the causes by which all things happen in the cosmos. A significant task, indeed, as Virgil implies in his famous line, 'Happy the one who can know the causes of things.'[1]

Why, then, is Janus put above Jove? The answer of the brilliant and learned Varro is: 'Because Janus is in charge of first things, while Jove has only the highest; therefore, Jove is rightly called the king of all. First things are lower than the highest, because although they come first in time, the highest come first in dignity.'

This would be a good enough answer if we were distinguishing the beginnings and consummations of actions. Thus, to start on a journey is the beginning of an action and to arrive is the consummation. So, too, learning is the beginning of an action and knowledge is the consummation. So in all things the beginnings come first, but the ends are the highest. But, this difference between Janus and Jove has already been discussed.[2]

However, the causes attributed to Jupiter are not actions, but agents; it is impossible that the actions or the beginnings of actions should come before their causes in time. What *makes* is always before what is *made*. If, then, to Janus belong the beginnings of actions or facts, these effects cannot be prior to the efficient causes which are attributed to Jupiter. The fact is that nothing happens or begins to happen which is not preceded by an efficient cause. But, what are we to say when we recall that this god, in whose power are all the causes

1 *Georgics* 2.490.
2 In Book III, Ch. 7.

of created natures and of natural things, is called Jove by the people, and is worshiped by them with plays filled with contumely and criminal scandals? Surely, these people are guilty of a worse sacrilege than if they denied that he was a god at all. It would be far better if they had taken any other being, however worthy of their indecent and criminal honors, and substituted this figment to be blasphemed (much as Saturn is supposed to have been fooled by having a stone substituted for Jove when he was about to be devoured by his father). This would have been better than to have one and the same god called thunderer and adulterer, world-ruler and rake, controller of the causes of all natures and natural things and yet lacking in self control.

Another question. If Janus is the cosmos, where among the gods do they place Jupiter? Varro defines the true god as the spirit of the cosmos and its parts; therefore, whatever is other than this is not, in their mind, a true god. Perhaps, then, they will say that Jupiter is the soul and Janus the body of the universe, that is to say, the world that we can see. But, if they put it this way, they will not be able to call Janus a god, since god, even according to themselves, is the spirit of the cosmos and its parts rather than its body. Varro tries to find a way out by asserting that god is the world-spirit and, at the same time, the world itself—but only in the sense that, as a man who is made up of body and soul is called wise in virtue of his soul, so the cosmos is made up of spirit and matter but is called god on account of the spirit. Hence, the body of the universe by itself is not god, but either its soul or the body and soul taken together—so long as it is called god because of the soul and not because of the body.

But, if we say that Janus is the cosmos and Janus is god, must we not say that Jupiter must be a part of Janus if he

is to be divine? Yet, the pagans prefer to attribute the universe to Jupiter, as we see in the Virgilian phrase, 'all things are filled with Jove.'[3] Hence, for Jove to be a god, and still more, King of the gods, they have to reckon him as the whole universe, reigning over the other gods who are parts of the universe. It is in reference to this conception that Varro, in a treatise *On the Worship of the Gods* which is not included in the *Antiquities,* discusses the following lines of Valerius Soranus:

> Jupiter, Lord over kings, over things, over gods,
> Father and Mother of gods, he is one, he is all.[4]

'Soranus was right,' says Varro, 'in speaking of Jupiter as father and mother,' since Jupiter is the world and therefore both puts forth and takes back all things that grow just as a father emits seed and a mother receives them. Varro goes on to comment: 'Soranus is also right in saying that one and all were the same, since the world is one and all things are contained in it.'

Chapter 10

Thus, Janus is the world; and Jupiter is the world; and there is only one world. How, then, can Janus and Jupiter be two distinct gods? Why do they have different temples, altars, shrines, and images? Is it enough that the force of

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3 *Eclogues* 3.60.

4 *Juppiter omnipotens regum rerumque deumque*
Progenitor genetrixque deum, deus unus et omnes.
Q. Valerius Soranus was a contemporary of Cicero, in the first century B.C.

beginnings is different from the force of causes, and that the name of the former is Janus, and Jupiter the name of the latter? Suppose one man has two faculties or two professions in different fields, and that the work of each is different. Do we, therefore, have two judges or two craftsmen?

The truth is that one and the same God has control over both beginnings and causes, but we do not have to think Him as two, merely because beginnings and causes are distinct realities. If the pagans were right in their thinking, they should say that Jupiter is as many different gods as he has names given to him because of his many powers. What is true, of course, is that the things from which the names are taken are many and different, and I shall deal with some of them.

Chapter 11

The pagans have given Jupiter the surnames Victor, Unconquered, Helper, Driver, Establisher, Hundred-Footed Wrestler, Sustainer, Fosterer, Nourisher,[1] and others too numerous to mention. These names were given to one god for a variety of causes and powers. They did not necessarily imply that he was many gods because he had many titles, for example, that he could conquer all and be conquered by none, bringing help to the needy, impelling, establishing, making secure, flooring opponents, holding up the world like a beam, fostering, and breast-feeding all living things.

Of these functions some are significant, others not so, yet the same god is said to perform them all. Of course, as compared with the difference between sustaining the universe and feeding animals at the breast, beginnings and causes are

1 *Victor, Invictus, Opitulus, Impulsor, Stator, Centumpeda, Supinalis, Tigillus, Almus, Ruminus.*

relatively alike, and it was because of these latter that the pagans wanted one world to make two gods, Jupiter and Janus. The former are altogether different in power and dignity, yet the differences did not make two gods, since one and the same Jupiter is called Tigillus as world-sustainer, and Ruminus as breast-feeder.

I might be impertinent in suggesting that offering the breast to suckling animals would better become Juno than Jove, since it was a goddess, Rumina, who was supposed to help Jupiter in this work. In any case, I suppose they could answer that Juno herself is not, in reality, distinct from Jupiter, and their proof would be the lines of Valerius Soranus already cited:

> Jupiter, Lord over kings, over things, over gods,
> Father and Mother of gods . . .

But, why did he have to be called Ruminus, since, likely enough, a careful investigation would show that he and the goddess Rumina are one? It was rightly reckoned unworthy of the divine majesty that, in one ear of corn, one god should have care of the core and another of the husk. It is still more unworthy that so lowly a function as feeding animals at the breast should be entrusted to the care of two different divinities, one being Jupiter, King of the cosmos, and the other being—not even his wife—the completely unknown Rumina. The only conclusion possible is that Jupiter is himself Rumina —or perhaps, Ruminus when he is suckling males and Rumina when he is suckling females!

Normally, I should suppose that the pagans were opposed to giving feminine names to Jupiter, but, then, there is the expression in the line of verse, 'Father and Mother of gods.' Besides, I think I have read somewhere that, along with his other surnames, he was called Pecunia [*Money*]. Now,

Pecunia is one of the minor divine functionaries about whom I spoke in Book IV. So, it is up to the pagans to explain why Jupiter should not be called both Pecunia and Pecunius—since both men and women have money—just as he should be called both Rumina and Ruminus.

Chapter 12

Now, just listen to the lovely account which the pagans give of the name Pecunia! Jupiter is called Pecunia, they tell us, because all things belong to him. What an explanation of a divine name! The fact is that Pecunia would be not only a vulgar but a slanderous name for anyone who possessed everything. Compared to all the other things contained in heaven and earth, what is money—all of it, all that men possess under the name of money? The fact is that nothing but men's greed gave this name to Jupiter. Those who love money wanted to think of themselves as loving, not just any god, but the very King of the gods.

It would be a different matter if Jupiter had been called Riches rather than Money. Riches and money are two different things. Even wise and just and good men are said to be 'rich,' though they have little or no money at all. Such men are rich in virtues; even when they are in need of material necessities, their virtues make them feel they have sufficient. On the other hand, greedy men are poor, always grasping for more and always in need. They can never be other than indigent in their abundance, however much money they own. Even God can rightly be called 'rich'—not, of course, in money, but in omnipotence.

Men of money, it is true, are popularly called rich, but they are inwardly as poor as they are greedy. So, too, men without money are called poor, but inwardly they are as rich as they

are wise. For a wise man, then, what kind of theology is that in which the 'King of the gods' gets one of his names from that thing 'which no wise man covets.' It would be even easier for them not to covet money, if only such wise men, for the good of their souls, knew something of the doctrine dealing with eternal life, namely, that the Ruler of the world takes His name not from money but from wisdom, for the love of wisdom takes away the stains of avarice and the love of money.

Chapter 13

If I pursue this discussion of Jupiter, it is only because it would seem that all the other gods are to be referred back to him, and thus there is an end to the inanity of polytheism. All these gods are one in him, sometimes being thought of as his parts or powers and sometimes as giving their many names to him, since the power of his spirit is diffused throughout the cosmos and since there are many parts making up the sum of our visible universe and the administrative tasks are manifold. What, for example, is Saturn? Varro answers: 'One of the principal gods, in whose hands is the power over all sowing' [*satio*].

Now, recall his exposition of the verses of Valerius Soranus, according to which Jupiter is the world, sending forth and taking back all seeds. From this, it follows that the power over all sowing is in the hands of Jupiter.

And what is Genius? 'The god,' says Varro, 'who is in charge of and has power over all things that are born.' But, that power, they believe, belongs to that world which was addressed in the words, 'Jupiter, Father and Mother of gods.' In another place, Varro says that each one's genius is his rational soul, and, as each person has his own genius, so is

the god the soul of the world. This comes to saying that the world spirit is the genius of the universe. This is the genius whose name is Jupiter. Not every genius is divine, for, if so, every man's soul would be a god, since every soul is a genius. Even the pagans refuse to admit so absurd a conclusion. All that is left for them is to call that Genius, par excellence, god who is the spirit of the universe and, therefore, Jupiter.

Chapter 14

The pagans found no way of referring Mercury and Mars to any parts of the universe, or to any of the divine activities which manifest themselves in the [four] elements. For this reason, they put them in charge at least of human activities, namely, speech and war. Because, if Mercury, for example, had power over the speech of the gods, he would have power over the King of the gods, whether Jupiter speaks at his dictation or, at least, with his permission. The conclusion is clearly absurd.

We must suppose, then, that Mercury has power only in regard to the activity of human speech. In that case, it is hard to believe that Jupiter, under his name of Ruminus, is willing to descend to the lowly function of suckling not merely babies but beasts, yet refuses the care of human speech—for here is our superiority to the animals. The conclusion is that Jupiter and Mercury are one and the same.

It may be objected that Mercury is merely another name for speech itself, as is proved from the meaning of the word. Mercury, they argue, means *medius currens,* 'running between' and speech 'runs between' men. So, too, in Greek, he is called Hermes, because *hermeneía* means speech or interpretation (which is an aspect of speech). And Mercury is in charge of merchandise on the premise that speech 'runs

between' buyers and sellers. He has wings on his feet and head to signify that speech flies like a bird through the air. Mercury is called a messenger, because speech is the messenger of thought. But, the conclusion here is that Mercury is not a god at all, since, on their own confession, he is nothing but speech. However, when the pagans make gods for themselves out of things which are not even demons, when they pray to unclean spirits, they are possessed by beings which are less than gods, for they are demons.

So, too, in regard to Mars, the pagans could find no element or part of the cosmos in which he could exercise any activity of nature. So, they called him the god of war, which is a work —though an unwanted one—of man. Thus, if only Felicity would provide us with perpetual peace, Mars would have nothing to do! Of course, Mars may be war itself as Mercury is speech. Well, I do not have to prove that war is not a god; but, would to God it were as easy to prove that the thing, which, even falsely, is called a god were not a war.

Chapter 15

It may be that certain of the pagan gods are nothing but the stars which bear their names. For example, there is one star called Mercury and another called Mars. There is another star, though, which they call Jupiter; yet, for them, Jupiter is the whole universe. There is one they call Saturn; yet to their god Saturn they attribute the not inconsiderable substance of all things that can grow. Then, there is the brightest of all stars, which they call Venus; yet, for some of them, Venus is also the moon. As to the bright star, Juno and Venus have rival claims—as they had for the golden apple. Some say Lucifer belongs to Venus; some, to Juno—and, as always, Venus wins. In fact, practically no one can be found to op-

pose the majority who attribute this star to Venus. But, the best joke is when they admit that the star of Jupiter, the 'King of the universe' is far outshone by the star of Venus. Surely, Jupiter should have been brighter than the rest, in proportion to his power. Their answer is that it merely seems this way, because Jupiter, which seems less bright, is higher up and farther removed from the earth.

Very well, but, if a higher place is the reward of greater dignity, why is Saturn even higher than Jupiter? Or was it that the echo of the fable which makes Jupiter king was too faint to reach the stars? Or, perhaps, Saturn was allowed to make up in the stars what he lost in Crete and on the Capitol! Another question. Why did Janus get no star? It is of no use to say: He is the universe and all stars are in him. Jupiter is also the universe, yet he has his star. Maybe Janus made the best of a bad job, making up by a multitude of faces on earth for the one star he lost in the heavens!

Further, it is merely because of the stars that Mercury and Mars are parts of the cosmos and so can be reckoned as gods; for, certainly, speech and war are not parts of the universe, but only human acts. But, Aries, Taurus, Cancer, Scorpion and the rest of the signs of the zodiac, which are not merely single stars but whole constellations, are said to be higher up in heaven where the steadier motion keeps the stars from wandering as the planets do. Why, then, do they have no altars, no sacrifices, no temples in their honor? The pagans never reckoned them as gods, not even as plebeian gods, so to speak, let alone as select divinities.

Chapter 16

According to the pagan conception, Apollo was a seer and a doctor, but, in order to assign him a part of the universe,

they called him the Sun, as they called his sister Diana the Moon. Diana was likewise given charge of roads[1] and hence was considered a virgin, on the ground that a road [*via*] produces nothing. Both Apollo and Diana have arrows to symbolize the fact that the rays of both the sun and moon reach as far as the earth. Vulcan is the fire of the universe as Neptune is water. Dispater or Orcus is the earth or lowest part of the universe. Bacchus and Ceres are in charge of things that grow, the former being assigned either to male seed or else to the fluid element of seeds, the latter to the female or dry element. Of course, this is all related to the universe or to Jupiter, who is called both 'Father and Mother' as being responsible for both the giving forth and getting back of all seed. However, they also regard Ceres as the Great Mother, which for them is the same as the earth; the earth, in turn, is also Juno. Hence, to Juno are assigned secondary causes, even though Jupiter is addressed as 'Father and Mother of the gods' because, in the pagan conception, he is the whole universe.

Minerva was given charge of human intellectual disciplines, but, when no star was available for her use, they called her the ether or, sometimes, the moon. Vesta they also regarded as one of the greatest of the goddesses in the belief that she, too, was the earth. Her special charge was the milder kind of fire which lightens the works of men, though not the violent kind that belongs to Vulcan.

It would thus appear that the pagans took all of the select divinities for the cosmos, seeing the whole in some and merely parts in others. Thus, Jupiter is the whole universe, while Genus, the Great Mother, Sol (or Apollo) and Luna (or

1 As such, her name was Trivia.

Diana) were parts. Sometimes, many things were made into one god; at other times, many gods made up one reality. Jupiter is an example of one god being many things—for he is the whole cosmos or the sky alone, and he is considered and called a single star. In the same way, Juno is the mistress of all secondary causes, but she is also the air and the earth and (when she takes away the honor from Venus) a star. So, too, Minerva is the highest ether and also the moon, which is reckoned as being in the lowest reaches of the ether.

However, they make several gods of a single thing. Thus, both Janus and Jupiter are the cosmos; and Juno and the Great Mother and Ceres are the earth.

Chapter 17

These are but a few specimens. But, all the rest of the mythology, too, is more confounded than expounded[1] by the interpretations. Wherever the currents of meandering opinion carry the interpreters they swing back and forth and hither and thither. Even Varro himself preferred to doubt about everything than to affirm anything with certainty. Thus, having finished the book about the known gods, which was the first of his last three, he began the second, dealing with the unknown gods, by saying: 'I hope I shall not be criticized for setting forth, in this book, doubtful opinions about the gods. Any of my readers who think they can, and should, make definite decisions are at liberty to make them. For myself, I could be more easily persuaded to cast doubt on what I decided in the first book than to attempt, in the book I am writing, a consistent synthesis.' Thus, he casts doubt, not only on

1 . . . *non explicant, sed potius implicant.*

the book about the unknown gods, but on the book about the ones that are certain.

In the third of these books which deals with the select gods, after a preface discussing certain important aspects of natural theology, he turns to the fanciful inanities and absurdities of the so-called political theology. Having no certain truth to guide him and hemmed in by the authority of tradition, he wrote as follows: 'I am to speak in this book of the official gods of the Roman people, gods for whom temples have been dedicated and whose many ornaments have made them famous, but I shall take my cue from a remark of Xenophanes of Colophon:[2] I shall set forth what seems, not what I can prove, to be true. In a field where only God has knowledge, man must be content with opinions.'

Writing, as he was, about human inventions, all he could do was to make a hesitating promise to deal with matters neither fully understood nor firmly believed, and subject to the fluctuations of doubts and opinions. He could know that the universe existed and was made up of the heavens and the earth, that the heavens were bright with stars and the earth rich in seeds, and so one; and he could believe with firm conviction that some omnipotent and invisible force ruled and arranged the immense structure of nature; but neither science nor faith could assure him that Janus was the cosmos, or explain why Saturn should be the father of Jupiter and yet have become his subject, and other things like that.

Chapter 18

In connection with all this mythology, the most satisfying hypothesis is that the gods were men whom flattery turned

2 Xenophanes of Colophon (*c.* 570-480 B.C.), founder of the Eleatic school of philosophy. His elegies and satires reveal his skepticism and pantheism.

into gods by reason of their genius or character, their life or luck. Soon, sacrifices and solemnities were started and, appealing as they did to men's minds which are no less avid for folly than the spirits of demons, they spread far and wide. Finally came the poets with their ornamental lies, and the devils did the rest with their wily seduction.

Take the story of Saturn, the father, being dethroned by Jupiter, his son. Varro interprets this by saying that the cause (of which Jupiter is the symbol) comes before the seed (which is associated with Saturn). It is much simpler if we suppose that some wicked young prince, or one who was afraid that his wicked father would kill him, wanted to be king and drove his father from the throne. If Varro's story were true, Saturn would never have preceded, nor would he have been the father of, Jupiter. For, the cause always comes before the seed, and could never be born of the seed. The fact is that even the most acute men get into difficulties when they try to dress up empty fables or even heroic deeds as symbols of natural phenomena. Such efforts, unfortunately, are as foolish as the fables.

Chapter 19

'Saturn,' says Varro, 'is said to have had the habit of devouring his own offspring. This symbolizes the fact that seeds return whence they spring. And, when we are told that a sod was given to Saturn to eat instead of Jupiter, that means that before the use of the plough was discovered, seed was buried in the ground by hand.' The conclusion from this is that Saturn should be called the soil, not the seed, for it is the soil that may be said to devour what it brings forth when seeds that spring from the soil return to be received into the ground.

What has covering the seed with soil by human hands got

to do with Saturn getting a sod to devour instead of Jupiter? Does some seed escape the fate of being devoured like the rest because it is covered with a sod? From what Varro says, you would think that the man who turns down the soil took away the seed (much as they took away Jupiter when they gave Saturn a sod), but, actually, the man who covered the seed with soil had the seed all the more thoroughly devoured.

Besides, in this interpretation, Jupiter is the seed, not the cause of the seed, as in the other account. But, everyone knows to what lengths a man is driven when he begins to explain folly and finds that nothing that is wise can be said. 'Saturn,' says Varro, 'has a sickle because of agriculture.' But, the fact is that, when Saturn was king, there was no agriculture. It is Varro himself who describes 'the good old days' of Saturn by saying that the earliest men lived from the fruit that the earth brought forth of its own accord. It would be a brighter idea to say that, when Saturn lost the sceptre, they gave him a sickle so that the idle king of the good old days might take up active farming when his son succeeded him!

Varro's explanation of why boys are offered in sacrifice to Saturn among the Carthaginians, as grown up men are among the Celts, is that a human being is the best of all the things that grow. But, what is the point of attempting any explanation of so irrational a cruelty? It is better for us to notice and to keep in mind that all such interpretations have no relevance whatever to the true God, the living, immaterial, immutable Being from whom alone we can beg for a life that is everlastingly happy. All such interpretations fall within the limits of what is material, temporal, mutable, and mortal.

'According to the fable,' Varro tells us, 'Saturn castrated his father the Sky; which means that Saturn and not Caelus has power over all seed that is divine.' The reason—if there

is any reason—for this is that in heaven nothing is born of seed. But, the real trouble is that, if Saturn is the son of Caelus, he is the son of Jupiter—since any number of the pagans insist that Caelus is Jupiter. Thus do all such constructions, not founded on truth, tumble and collapse by themselves. Varro says that Saturn is called Chronos (which is Greek for a period of time), since no seed is productive without time.

Thus, everything said about Saturn goes back to seed, and you would think that, with all his powers, he at least could handle seed all by himself. Why, then, were those other gods required for this purpose, especially Bacchus and Libera or Ceres? Yet, as far as seed is concerned, Varro says so much about these other gods that you would almost forget that he said anything about Saturn.

Chapter 20

The best known of the rites of Ceres are the Eleusinian mysteries, which were very highly regarded by the Athenians. Of these, Varro offers no interpretation except in connection with corn, which was a discovery of Ceres, and with Proserpina, who was robbed from Ceres by Orcus. Proserpina, he says, is a symbol of fertility. The fable started from the fact that, for lack of fertility, the earth remained for some time sterile and, as it were, in mourning. It began to be told how Orcus kidnaped the daughter of Ceres who was called Proserpina (or fertility), and kept her in the lower world. The name Proserpina is derived from the verb *proserpere,* to sprout forth. Her loss was celebrated with public mourning; then, when fertility returned to the earth, there was great public rejoicing because Proserpina had been restord, and this rejoicing took the form of a religious rite. Varro goes on to

say that there are many traditions in the mysteries of Ceres which relate simply to the introduction of crops.

Chapter 21

We now come to the rites of Bacchus. The pagans had put Bacchus in charge of fluid seeds, including both the juices of fruits, of which wine is the most important, and also the seeds of animals. These rites were so disgusting that I should be ashamed to describe them at the length they call for, were it not that I might stir the proud but lazy conscience of the pagans.

Of many things that I must pass over briefly there is the celebration at the crossroads in Italy. This is so licentious, Varro tells us, that in honor of Bacchus male pudenda are openly worshiped with blatant indecency and without regard for modesty or privacy. During the festival days, the pudenda are paraded in a cart and with great honor, first at the crossroads in the country, and then they are carried into the city.

In the city of Lavinium, one whole month is given over to the celebration of Bacchus, and until that member has been finally carried across the forum and put in its repository, the whole population indulges in the most disgusting language. One of the most distinguished matrons of the place is made, in public, to put a crown on the pudendum of Bacchus. Thus, to make Bacchus propitious in the sowing season and to keep all enchantment from the crops, a respectable lady is made to do in public what not even a harlot would be allowed to do in a theatre if women were present.

This is why Saturn alone was not considered sufficient to take care of what is sown. The impure soul wants new occasions for multiplying gods. Such a soul, separated from the one true God by reason of its impurity, is prostituted to many

false gods by its lust for ever increasing impurity. It ends by calling sacrilege sacred and giving itself over to violation and pollution by a crowd of filthy demons.

Chapter 22

Neptune already had one wife, Salacia—symbol of the deeper water of the ocean. Why must he be given Venilia also? There was no need in terms of religion. It is explained only by the lust of the impure soul, craving for solicitations from the demons. However, just listen to the interpretation of the lofty pagan theology as it silences my reproach by its reply. 'Venilia,' Varro tells us, 'is the wave as it breaks on the shore; Salacia is the same water returning to the open sea [*salum*].' Why then, are there two goddesses, since the water is the same whether it is coming or going?

Mad lust, foaming after many gods, is not unlike this water churning on the shore. The tide that flows and ebbs is not two, but one; the poor mortal soul that flows in life and ebbs in death grasps at this meaningless occasion of calling in two more demons to corrupt her further.

I challenge Varro himself, or any of his readers who think they have learned something significant from the writings of such learned men, to give me an interpretation of this stuff in terms even of theory of the soul of the universe and its parts, which they take to be true gods. I do not ask them to explain it in terms of that eternal and immutable nature which alone is the true God.

To have made the part of the world-spirit that permeates the sea into their god Neptune is bad enough, but it is a mistake that is tolerable. But, how does it follow that the wave breaking on the shore and then retreating into the deep sea makes two parts of the cosmos or two parts of the world-

spirit? Not even one of the pagans is fool enough to believe it. What reason, then, was there for making two gods except this, that the wisdom of the ancient pagans made provision, not that the people should be ruled by a number of gods, but that a number of the wicked spirits that rejoice in such inanity and falsehood should take possession of people's souls. Again, why, in this interpretation, did Salacia lose the lower reaches of the ocean where she was subject to her husband? For, by making her the receding water a moment ago they put her on the surface. Is it possible that she flew into a rage over Neptune's affair with Venilia, and drove him from the upper part of the sea?

Chapter 23

The earth is a single whole, though it is seen to be filled with innumerable living beings. On the other hand, why do the pagans want to divinize what is merely a large body that, among the elements, is the lowest part of the universe? Is the reason the fertility of the earth? Then, why not rather make into gods the men who make the earth more fertile by their cultivation? They cultivate the earth, not by praying, but by ploughing. The pagan answer is that the part of the world-spirit that permeates the earth makes it divine.

Surely, there is in man a spirit whose existence is so evident as never to be doubted. Yet, men are not reckoned as gods, and, what is worse, they are led by a marvelous but miserable mistake to worship and adore beings who are not merely not gods but are not as good as the men themselves. Curiously enough, it is Varro himself who in this very book on the select gods admits that there are three grades of animation to be found throughout nature. The first kind of soul is in every living part of the body, giving it power to live, but not to perceive. In the human body, this grade of soul, Varro says,

penetrates into the bones, the nails, the hair. In much the same way, trees in nature are fed, and grow and, in their own way, live without sensation. The second kind of soul is that in which there is sensation. Its force reaches to the eyes, ears, nose, mouth, and the sense of touch. The third and highest kind of soul is called spirit. Intelligence is its supreme endowment. Among mortal creatures, only men possess it.

This part of men's spirit, Varro says, is called genius; this part of the world-spirit is called god, and his bones and nails, as it were, are the visible stones and soil which have no power to feel. In this view, the sun and moon and stars which we see and by which god perceives are his senses. God's spirit is the ether and its force permeates the stars and makes them gods and, through them, reaches the earth and makes it the goddess Tellus. From the earth, in turn, it permeates the sea and ocean and so makes the god Neptune.

Obviously, it would be better for Varro to get back to political theology and away from this stuff he calls natural theology. He left political theology for a rest. He was tired of all its turning and twisting paths. All the same, I want him to get back. I want to keep him in political theology while I discuss it for a moment. I may discuss later whether the earth and rocks—which correspond to our bones and nails—are areas lacking in intelligence as they are in sensation. So, too, I may raise the issue with philosophers of the fallacy of arguing that, because bones and nails are in a man who has intelligence, the bones and nails therefore have intelligence. The point is that it is no more foolish for a man to argue that the men are gods because men are in the cosmos than it is foolish for a man to argue that bones and nails are men because they are in us who are men. But I want to get back to Varro as a political theologian.

It seems to me just possible that, although Varro gives the impression of strutting about for the moment in the freedom of natural theology, even in writing this book where he thought he was concerned with natural theology—and his own reputation—he nevertheless was still thinking in terms of the state religion, and his main concern was to defend the ancient Romans and other political communities from the charge of worshiping Tellus and Neptune in vain.

My present objection is this. Since the earth is a single whole, why does the part of the world-spirit inhabiting the earth make it the one goddess whom Varro calls Tellus? For, if it did so, what would happen to Orcus (or Dispater, as they call him), the brother of Jupiter and Neptune? And where would his wife Proserpina come in? And, by the way, according to a variant opinion in the same book, she is not the fertility, but the lower regions, of the earth.

Of course, they may answer that a part of the world-spirit, in so far as it permeates the upper regions of the earth, makes Dispater a god, and, in so far as it inhabits the lower regions, also makes Proserpina a goddess. Very well, but in that case what becomes of Tellus? The whole that she was supposed to be is so divided into those two parts and gods that no one could know where a third part could be found or who it would be. The only way out is to say, I suppose, that the two of them taken together, Orcus and Proserpina, make up the one goddess Tellus and that there are not three, but either one or two. All the same, there are three names and they are reckoned three divinities and are worshiped as three with their respective altars, shrines, sacrifices, statues, and priests—and, by these means, their demons seduce and sully the protituted soul.

Another question I should like to have answered is this: What part of the earth must a part of the world-spirit inhabit

in order to make a god of Tellumo? 'No special part,' answers Varro, 'since one and the same earth has a double life: one masculine and seed-producing; the other feminine, receptive and nourishing. From the feminine force, the earth is called Tellus; from the masculine, Tellumo.'

The only trouble is, as Varro himself points out, that the priests offer sacrifice to Tellus, Tellumo, Altor, and Rusor, the last two gods being thrown in to make four. About Tellus and Tellumo, something has already been said. But why sacrifice to Altor? Varro's answer is: Because from the earth all things that are born are nourished [*aluntur*]. And why to Rusor? Because all things go back [*rursus*] from where they came.

Chapter 24

Granted that the earth was entitled to four epithets because of its fourfold power, it should not have been called four gods. After all, there is only one Jupiter and one Juno, in spite of their many surnames. In all such attributes there is implied a single manifold force which is admitted to belong either to one god or to one goddess. Plurality of epithets does not constitute plurality of divinities. The fact is that, just as poor victims of lust first seek a multitude of lovers and then tire of them and repent, so the poor soul, cheapened and prostituted to unclean spirits, at first craves for a crowd of gods and further corruption, but, at last, like a victim of lust, tires of her lovers. At any rate, the soul of Varro seems to grow ashamed of so many gods and is content to think of Tellus as a single divinity. 'It is all one and the same Great Mother,' he admits, 'whether with her tambourine she symbolizes the globe of the earth, or with the towers on her head she stands for towns, or whether, when she is seated, she signi-

fies that all else moves around the earth that is still. And when the goddess is served by eunuchs, that means that those who need seed must go to the earth, for in the earth all things are found. The frantic gesticulations before her are meant to teach the tillers of the soil that they must never rest, for there is always work for them to do. The clatter of cymbals and the clapping of hands and the tinkling of tools and so on signify the rattling and rumbling of agricultural life. The cymbals are bronze because bronze tools used to be employed in the fields before iron was invented. The goddess is given a lion, unchained and tame, to show that there is no bit of land so remote and wild that cannot be cleared and cultivated.'

He goes on to add, by giving Mother Earth many names and epithets, they took her for many gods. 'They think of Tellus,' he says, 'as Ops, because soil is improved by toil [*opus*]; as Mater, because she is the mother of many things; as Magna, because her great product is food; as Proserpina, because crops sprout out [*proserpant*] from the earth; as Vesta, because the grass is her vesture. And so with other goddesses; they are not unreasonably identified with the Great Mother.' But, if she is one goddess—and, in truth, she is not even that—why, nevertheless, all this going off into many goddesses? There is no objection to one thing having all these names, but there is no reason to make as many goddesses as there are names.

However, Varro becomes weighed down by the authority of tradition and he grows afraid of his own admission. So, he goes on to add: 'There is no contradiction between what I have said and the view of the ancients that these were distinct divinities.' No contradiction! Surely, for one goddess to have many names is altogether different from one goddess being many goddesses! 'But,' replies Varro, 'it is possible for

a thing both to be one and to contain within itself many realities.' Of course; I agree that in one man there are many realities. Does it follow, therefore, that there are many men? So, too, in one goddess there may be many realities. Does it follow that there are many goddesses? But, why argue with people who add or subtract, multiply or divide their gods by whim. Such ways end in a maze.[1]

Such, at any rate, are the boasted mysteries of Tellus and the Magna Mater. They are supposed to add up to an account of procreation and agriculture. But, the question is: Do the symbols of this purpose, the drum and towers, the eunuchs and gesticulations, the beating of cymbals and the taming of lions offer to anyone the promise of eternal life? Is the real reason for the eunuchs serving this Great Mother that they may symbolize the fact that those in need of seed should serve the earth? The simple fact is that it is their very service which created their need of seed. Did they, by serving this goddess, get the seed they needed, or did they, by serving her, lose the seed they had? There is no place for interpretation here, only for execration.[2]

The point the interpretations miss is the way the malignant spirits win. They asked this ruthless price, and they dared not promise anything in return for this sacrifice. If the earth were not a goddess, they might set their hands to work on it and see that it would germinate; they would not set savage hands upon themselves so that they could no longer seminate. If the earth were not a goddess, it would become so fertile by others'

1 *Verum, sicut volunt, dividant, conflent, multiplicent, replicent, implicent.* Cf. the *non explicant, sed potius implicant* in Chapter 17. Following a suggestion of Welldon, it is possible to suggest St. Augustine's assonance by the words Multiplication, duplication, and complication.

2 *Hoc interpretari est an destestari?*

hands that it would not force a man to become sterile by his own.

And, what are we to say of the mysteries of Bacchus and the respectable lady crowning the god's pudendum, with a crowd looking on, including, perhaps, her blushing and perspiring husband—if any shame is left in the world. And, what of the marriage ceremony where the young bride is bidden to sit on the monstrous member of Priapus? All one can say is that such things are insignificant and negligible compared with the brutal shamelessness and shameless brutality of the demoniacal rites which make a mockery of both the sexes without mortally wounding either. In the cult of Bacchus, men are afraid of hexing a field, but, here, there is no fear of unsexing a man.[3] It is bad enough to sully a maiden's modesty, leaving her virginity and fecundity intact. It is quite another thing so to unsex a man that he neither becomes a woman nor remains a man.

Chapter 25

Varro makes no mention of Attis, and you will look in vain for any interpretation of the man in memory of whose love the eunuch is mutilated. However, the scholars and philosophers of Greece have not been silent about so high and holy a matter. The well-known philosopher Porphyry[1] says that Attis is the symbol of flowers, because he is beautiful as the face of the earth is beautiful in spring, and that he lost his virility because the blossoms fall before the fruit is ripe. Thus, it was not the man—or the half-man—called Attis, but merely

3 More assonance. *Ibi fascinatio timetur agrorum, hic membrorum amputatio non timetur.*

1 Porphyry (233-*c.* 304), the Neoplatonic philosopher, whose work on the allegorical theology of the Greeks and Egyptians is now lost.

his virility that was compared with flowers. The theory was that his *virilia* fell like blossoms in the flower of his youth; the fact is that they did not fall, nor were they merely plucked; they were mangled. What is more, it was sterility and not fruit that followed the losing of this flower. But, what does the man himself and what was left of him mean? What does he symbolize? What phenomenon of nature do the interpreters mention? After all such futile efforts and the failure to find any interpretation, the most that anyone can believe is that a rumor became started about a purely human being who was emasculated and that the rumor became written up. Our good Varro turns his back on the whole thing, but, though he has nothing to say, he knew the story.

Chapter 26

There is another matter which Varro omits and which I have nowhere found in books. I mean the eunuchs consecrated to the Great Mother in contempt of every man and woman who has a sense of shame. Only yesterday, they could be seen in the streets and squares of Carthage, with their oily hair and powdered faces, foppish and feminine in their way of walking, begging from the shopkeepers enough to prolong their disgusting lives.

What can rhetoric, philosophy, and theology do but hush and blush and rush away?[1] Not only in name, but in shame, is the Great Mother greater than all the gods that she begot. Compared with this monster, the monstrosity of Janus is nothing. His only ugliness was in his statues; hers was in the savagery of worship. In his statues there was a face too many; in her servants, a member too few. Not even Jupiter and all his adulteries are a match for her immorality. He corrupted

1 *Defecit interpretatio, erubuit ratio, conticuit oratio.*

many women, but in heaven his one unnatural sin was with Ganymede. But she, with her innumerable professed and public effeminates, stained the earth and slandered heaven.

Perhaps her only peer—unless we rank him higher—in this more than bestial brutality is Saturn, who is said to have mutilated his own father. But, at least, in the sacrifices to Saturn men are killed by others' hands, not mutilated by their own. The worst that can be said of Saturn, even in the poets' fancies, is that he devoured his own children. In plain history, he killed them—whatever the elaborations of the theological interpreters may be. Even then, the Romans never accepted the Carthaginian practice of immolating children. However, into the Roman temples the Great Mother of the gods led her eunuchs and kept alive the tradition of her savagery—and the idea that effeminacy could invigorate the manhood of Rome! Compared with this, the thievery of Mercury, the lechery of Venus, and the indecencies and adulteries of all the rest of the gods are mere bagatelles. They are all in the books and I could give chapter and verse, if they were not sung and danced every day on the stage. In any case, they are trifles compared with the great evil peculiar to the Great Mother.

The worst of it is that they blame the poets for all their fancies—as though it were a fancy, and not a fact, that the filth not only pleases but placates the gods. It is well enough to blame the poets for the suggestive songs and the risqué writings, but, that this stuff should be made a part of divine worship and praise—that is the responsibility of the gods who, by commanding and demanding, got it done. It was one more proof that the gods are demons and deceivers of men. One thing the poets never fancied and never sung—the unspeak-

able horror of the Mother of the gods consecrating castration and calling it worship.

Does any man really believe that he should worship such select gods with a view to happiness after death, when the very worship is bound to make him immoral during life? What is that worship but the service of filthy superstition and slavery to unclean demons?

But, says Varro, in the light of natural interpretations, all these things are wholly innocent. Could he possibly mean, holy in no sense?[2] In any case, how can something already in nature have a natural interpretation?

What we Christians look for is a soul that trusts in true religion and disdains to adore the world as God, a soul that is ready to praise the world as a work of God, for the sake of God, a soul wholly cleansed from worldly stains and holy enough to meet the whole world's Maker.[3]

Chapter 27

The conclusion seems to be that the select gods became more famous and renowned than the rest of the gods, not that their virtues might be held up to view, but that their vices might not be hidden. It is, therefore, easier to believe that they were nothing but men—as both poets and historians have said. Take, for example, the Virgilian lines:

2 . . . *referuntur ad mundum. Videat ne potius ad inmundum.* The pun here consists in the fact that *mundus* means 'nature' and *inmundus* means 'unclean.' Welldon suggests translating by 'nature as a whole' and 'nature which is unholy.' Apart from the pun, perhaps we might translate: 'In all this stuff, what is Varro trying to do but turn sins against nature into symbols of nature?'

3 . . . *mundus perveniat ad Deum qui condidit mundum*: keeping up the pun on *mundus* ('clean') and *mundus* ('the world').

> Saturn descended, first, Olympian heights,
> Jove-driven, robbed of all his regal rights.[1]

Then, read the context. The whole story, as Euhemerus has shown, in a work which Ennius translated into Latin, is just a piece of history. This whole matter of the historical criticism of mythology has, in fact, been fully treated by both Latin and Greek authors, and I need not, therefore, linger on the subject.

As for the naturalist interpretations of mythology, whereby able scholars seek to transform human happenings into a theology of nature, the highest reality reached, as far as I can see, is the operation of material natures in time and place. Even if an invisible force is found, it is a force subject to change. In no sense do they reach the power of the true God. The best that can be said for symbolic interpretations when they are inspired by a religious sentiment is that they neither involve nor enforce what is ugly and immoral; but, the pity of it is that men do not pass from symbols and shadows to the substance of the existence and attributes of the true God. If it is wicked to worship any body or any spirit in place of the true God, who alone, by His presence within the soul, can make the soul happy, it is still more wicked to worship either bodies or souls in such wise that neither the body nor the soul of the worshiper grows in either human dignity or divine grace.

What is wrong, then, when some element of nature or some created spirit, however far from being evil or unclean, is worshiped with temples, priesthood, and sacrifice which is due only to the true God, is not that the means of worship are

1 *Aeneid* 8.319-320.

evil, but that these are means which should be reserved solely for Him to whom such worship and service are due. On the other hand, if anyone really tries to worship the one true God, the Creator of every body and of every soul, by purely material or even monstrous statues, by human sacrifices, by the coronation of male pudenda, by the payment of prostitutes, by mutilation or emasculation, by the consecration of eunuchs, by impure festivals and obscene plays, then his sin does not consist in worshiping the wrong object, but in worshiping the right object in the wrong way.

A third kind of worshiper is the one who uses the wrong means, namely, things which are indecent or evil, and whose end is not the true God, the Creator of spirit and matter, but a creature—whether good or bad, whether spirit or matter, or a combination of soul and body. This kind of worshiper commits a double sin: first, in worshiping what is not God in place of God; second, in worshiping with such means as are unfit for the worship either of God or of anything else.

As for the pagans, it is clear that their way of worshiping was indecent and immoral. It would not have been clear what or whom they worshiped, did not their own history testify that, yielding to the threatening demands of their divinities, they offered rites which they knew to be indecent and disgusting. The conclusion is clear beyond ambiguity. The whole point of this political theology was to invite wicked demons and unclean spirits to take up residence in their dumb images, and, by this means, to take possessions of foolish hearts.

Chapter 28

What, then, is the value of the elaborate attempt of so acute a scholar as Varro to catalogue all these gods and to find a place for each of them in heaven or on earth? The effort

was a failure. The gods slip out of his hands and bounce about; they slide away and disappear. Just take the beginning of his discussion of goddesses. 'Since, as I have pointed out in my first book, which was concerned with Places, there are two sources from which gods come, namely, heaven and earth, and hence two categories, celestial and terrestrial; and since, in the earlier book I began with heaven and with Janus (whom some consider heaven, others earth), so now that I am to speak of goddesses I begin with Tellus (Earth).'

I can feel the embarassment from which this very able mind is suffering. His mind is guided by a seemingly sound principle that heaven is an active principle and the earth is passive. His first deduction is that a masculine activity and a feminine receptivity be attributed, respectively, to heaven and earth. But, what he fails to notice is that the One who made both the active and the passive principles is the God who made both heaven and earth.

It was, in fact, in this sense, in an earlier book, he interpreted the celebrated mysteries of the Samothracians. He makes a kind of vow to write out an exposition which he would send to them, even though it involved points unknown to his own friends. He tells us that in Samothrace he gathered many indications from the images that showed that three realities were symbolized; heaven, earth, and the archetypes of both, or, as Plato would say, the ideas. Jupiter was a symbol of heaven; Juno of the earth; and Minerva, of the ideas. Heaven, earth, and the archetype are, respectively, that by which, that from which, that according to which a thing begins to be. (In passing, I ought to say that in Plato himself the ideas have such force that heaven does not make anything, but is itself made according to them.)

What is more to the point, in the present book about the select gods; Varro loses sight of the principle of the three divinities in which, elsewhere, he all but reached an all-inclusive synthesis. Here he attributes the male gods to heaven, the female gods to earth, and among them he puts Minerva, whom he previously had placed above heaven itself. And then the male god Neptune is in the sea, which is more a part of the earth than of heaven. Finally, Dispater (or Pluto, as he is called in Greek) is also a male god, the brother of the other two, but is called a god of earth and reigns over the upper reaches of earth, while his wife Proserpina is in the lower regions.

On what principle, therefore, do the pagans refer the gods to heaven and the goddesses to earth? There is no solid, fixed, serious, definite principle running through Varro's entire discussion. There you have the source of all the goddesses, Tellus, the Great Mother, who is served by the nasty and noisy crowd of effeminates and eunuchs, cutting their flesh and wildly gesticulating. But, what is really meant by saying that Janus is the head of the gods and Tellus the head of the goddesses? The fact is that, with Janus, error as usual is many-headed, and with Tellus frenzy loses its head.[1]

In any case, what is the point of their useless effort to make of the gods symbols of natural phenomena? Even though they succeeded, no religious soul is going to worship nature in place of the true God. The obvious truth is that they have not succeeded. Let them be content to reduce the whole of mythology to dead men and bad demons, and the argument will come to an end.

1 *Nec ibi facit unum caput error, nec hic sanum furor.*

Chapter 29

There is nothing which the philosophical theories of pagan theology referred to natural phenomena which could not, without a shadow of sacrilege, have been better referred to the true God, the Author of nature, the Creator of every soul and of every body. It could have been done in some such formula as the following. We worship God. We do not adore heaven and earth, the two essential parts of the universe; nor do we adore any world-spirit nor any spirits diffused throughout any kind of living beings. We adore God who made heaven and earth and all that they contain, God who made every kind of soul, from the lowest that lives without sensation and intellection through the sentient up to the soul that can think.

Chapter 30

At this point, I must mention various operations of the one true God. It was because of these that the pagan philosophers, who were making a serious effort to interpret the indecent and immoral mysteries, made for themselves so many false gods. First, then, it is the God we worship who constituted, for each of the natures He created, an origin and purpose of its being and powers of action. He holds in His hands the causes of things, knowing them all and connecting them all. It is He who is the source of all energy in seeds, and He who put rational souls, or spirits, into the living beings He selected, and He who gave us the gifts of speech and language.

The God we worship chose certain spirits and gave them the power of foresight, and through them He makes prophecies. To others He gave the gift of healing. He controls the

beginnings, progress, and endings of wars, when they are needed for the punishment or reformation of mankind. He rules the universal element of fire, so vehement and violent, yet so necessary for the equilibrium of nature. He is the Creator and Ruler of all the water of the universe. He made the sun, the brightest of all luminous bodies, and He gave it an appropriate energy and motion.

His sovereignty and power reach to the lowest things. All things that grow and sustain animal life, both liquids and solids, He produced and made appropriate for different natures. He gave us the earth, the fertility of soil, and foods for men and beasts. All causes, primary and secondary, come within His knowledge and control. He gave to the moon its phases, and in the air and on the ground He provided ways for traveling. He endowed the human intelligences which He created with a knowledge of the arts and sciences which help both life and nature. He instituted mating and marriage for the propagation of life, and to communities of men He gave the boon of fire, to keep them warm and give them light and make their efforts easier.

Such, at least, are the activities which the acute and learned Varro sought to distribute among the select gods, by appealing to those so-called natural interpretations, some of which are traditional and some of which he made up out of his own head. The truth is that all these actions and energies belong to the one true God, who is really a God, who is wholly present everywhere, is confined by no frontiers and bound by no hindrances, is indivisible and immutable, and, though His nature has no need of either heaven or of earth, He fills them both with His presence and His power.

Yet, the Creator of every nature has so ordained that each of His creatures is permitted to have and to exercise powers

of its own. Although without Him they could not exist, their essence is different from His. He does many things by the ministry of angels, but their only source of beatitude is God Himself. And He Himself, and not the angels, is the source of men's beatitude, even though He sometimes uses angels as messengers to men. It is from this one true God that we look for everlasting life.

Chapter 31

I have already said something of the general blessings of God, which, in the natural course of things, come to the good and the bad alike. However, beyond this bounty, He has reserved for the good a special sign of His great love. We can never sufficiently thank Him for the gifts of nature: that we exist and are alive, that we can enjoy the sight of earth and sky, that we have a reasoning mind by which we can seek Him who has made all these things. Yet, for the greater gifts of grace there are not hearts enough or tongues enough in all the world even to try to thank Him. For, when we were burdened and broken by our sins, and our minds were turned from His light and blinded by the love of the darkness of iniquity, He did not leave us to ourselves, but sent to us His Word, who is His only Son, so that, by His birth and passion in the flesh He assumed for our salvation, we might learn how highly God esteemed our human nature, and that we might be cleansed from all our sins by His unique Sacrifice and, by His Spirit, have Love poured into our hearts, so that, with all our warring over, we might come to everlasting rest in the supreme blessedness of gazing on His face.

Chapter 32

This mystery of eternal life, from the beginnings of the human race, has been announced to all whom it concerned by messengers of God, using outward signs and sacred symbols appropriate to particular periods. A little later, as though to enact this sacred Mystery, the Hebrew people was gathered into a single community in which all that was to happen from the coming of Christ until our day and beyond our day was foretold by men, some of whom had knowledge and some of whom had not. Still later, this nation was dispersed among the Gentiles to carry with them the witness of the Scriptures in which the future Redemption in Christ was foretold.

Thus, all that was fulfilled in Christ is being fulfilled before our eyes, and all that remains still to be fulfilled was not only preannounced in spoken prophecies and in the precepts of moral and religious life as contained in Holy Scripture, but was likewise symbolized by the Jewish rites, priesthood, tabernacle or temple, altars, sacrifices, ceremonies, festivals, and all the rest that belongs to the service which is due to God and which in Greek is properly called *latreía*—and all was with a view to the eternal life of those who believe in Christ.

Chapter 33

It was by means of the true religion alone that it could be made manifest that the gods of the pagans were nothing but unclean spirits who used the memory of people departed or the images of earthly creatures to get themselves reckoned as gods and who then rejoiced with proud impurity that divine honors should be paid to such disgusting and indecent

things, all the while hating to see men's souls turn to the true God. From their horrible and hateful domination a man is delivered by faith in Him who showed us the way to rise by going to a depth of humility as great as the height of pride from which they fell.

To this category of unclean spirits belong not only the lesser gods of which I have said so much, and many, many other gods of the same sort among the various peoples of the world, but likewise those gods who were selected to form a sort of Senate of the gods. From what I have just been reporting, they were obviously chosen more for the notoriety of their wickedness than for the nobility of their virtues. By trying to give a meaning to their mysteries in terms of the phenomena of nature, Varro seeks to lend dignity to indecency. But, of course, the facts of nature do not square with the fictions of the gods, and Varro fails to make the realities and the rites agree, for the simple reason that the phenomena of nature are not, as he thinks—or wants to have thought—the real source from which the rites were drawn.

The best that can be said of Varro's interpretations or of any interpretations of this sort is that, although they have nothing to do with the true God and with the eternal life which is the very purpose of religion, they do help to mitigate the offense given by the mysteries, by suggesting that some ill-understood indecency or absurdity becomes clear in the light of some correlative phenomena in nature. And this is what Varro did in regard to some of the stage plays and temple mysteries, though he succeeded rather in damning the temples for being like the theatres than in absolving the theatres for copying the temples. However, Varro tried as best he could to temper the outrage done to men's sense of decency by interpreting disgusting scenes as symbols of causes at work in nature.

Chapter 34

Unfortunately, that very great scholar himself has told the story of the books of Numa Pompilius and of how the real sources from which the rites were drawn were so disgusting that they were unfit to be kept even in a book hidden in the dark, let alone to be openly read by religious people. In Book III, I promised to speak of this matter in its proper place, and, so, a word must now be said.

Here is the story as it is told by Varro himself in the book he wrote on the worship of the gods. 'Once upon a time, a man called Terentius owned a farm at the foot of the Janiculum hill, and one day his ploughman was making a furrow near the tomb of Numa Pompilius. The ploughshare turned up the books of Numa in which were written the reasons for instituting the rites of the gods.[1] Terentius brought the books to the city praetor. As soon as the praetor had read the opening lines, he realized the importance of the discovery and brought the books to the Senate. When the Senators read in the book a few of the original reasons why this or that rite had been instituted, they were moved, as the dead Numa had been moved, by a sense of religious reverence, and they voted that the praetor should have the books burned.'

Any man is free to believe what he thinks: if anyone can be found to defend the infamy of those books, he is free to say whatever an unreasoning contentiousness may suggest. My own suggestion is that the explanation of the Roman rites as written out by King Pompilius who instituted them was never meant to be known either to the people, or the Senate, or even to the priests themselves. It appears that Numa Pom-

1 According to Livy (40.29), the books buried by Numa Pompilius (715-673 B.C.) were discovered 573 years later after the founding of Rome, i.e., in 181 B.C.

pilius, by some illicit curiosity, had learned the secrets of the demons and then wrote them out in order to have a memorandum he could read. Yet, he seems to have been afraid to teach them to anyone—although as king he had nothing to fear from any of his subjects. At the same time, he was afraid of destroying them, or of losing them, or even of letting the pages become worn out. Thus, he was afraid that men might be taught wickedness which he wanted no one to know, and he was equally afraid that demons might be angry with him if he injured the books. So, he buried them in a safe spot, as he thought, never imagining that a plough would ever come near his tomb.

As for the Senate, it dared not condemn the religious rites of antiquity, and, in this sense, had to share the ideas of Numa. On the other hand, the Senate was so convinced of the danger of books like that, that they were too afraid merely to bury them. They knew that, with so many in the secret, human curiosity would try desperately to find the books. So, they decided to destroy by fire every trace of such monstrous wickedness. The rites, they felt, simply had to go on, but it was better for the people to be wrong in ignorance than for the state to be wrecked by a knowledge of the original reasons for the rites.

Chapter 35

After all, Numa had no prophet of God or any holy angel to tell him what religious rites he ought to ordain and observe; so, his only recourse was to hydromancy, to the images of the gods or, rather, illusions of the devils which he thought he could see in water. This kind of divination, Varro tells us, was introduced from Persia and was made use of by Numa and later by Pythagoras the philosopher. When blood is used

and information is sought from those in the lower regions it is called by the Greek word *nekuiomanteía;* under either name, hydromancy or necromancy, it is the same thing, an apparent divination by the dead. By what tricks such things are done is their affair, not mine—thoughI feel obliged to say that, even before the coming of our Saviour, such magic was forbidden by state laws under the sanction of very severe punishment. I hate to mention this; it is perhaps just possible that in Pompilius' time such tricks were allowed. At any rate, he used them to learn about the sacred rites. Then, he revealed the rites, but concealed the origin—for he himself was afraid of the reasons for the rites which he had learned. It was the books which contained these reasons which the Senate ordered to be burned.

What does it matter, then, whether Varro excogitated all sorts of natural interpretations of the religious rites. Certainly, the books would not have been burned if those were the interpretations to be found in the books or, if they were, then the members of the Senate would have also consigned to the flames the books which Varro wrote and published and which he addressed to Caesar as Pontifex Maximus. Another point that Varro makes in his book is that it was because Numa Pompilius carried out [*egesserit*] water for the hydromancy that he is said to have had the nymph Egeria for his wife. It is another illustration of the way a sprinkling of falsehoods can turn history into fables.[1]

It was by means, then, of water magic that the overcurious King of Rome learned both the rites, which were to be kept in writing in the priestly books, and also the reasons for the rites, which were meant to be known by no one but himself.

1 *Ita enim solent res gestae aspersione mendaciorum in fabulas verti.*

These reasons, written down but kept apart, he decided, so to speak, to let die with himself. He took care, therefore, to have them buried and withdrawn from the knowledge of men.

Two hypotheses may be suggested. Either what was written in the books were the lusts of the demons, which were so sordid and wicked as to make the whole of the state religion seem disgusting even to the priests whose life it was to perform such shameful services, or else the whole thing was just stories about men long dead, who, with the lapse of time, had come to be reckoned by nearly all the pagan peoples as immortal gods. Even in the latter case, the demons were delighted with such rites by which they had themselves worshiped under the guise of dead men. It was the demons who saw that the dead men were taken for gods and who managed to produce the witness of sham miracles.

It was by the hidden providence of the true God that the demons were permitted to confess what they knew to their friend Pompilius, after he had won them over by the tricks of water magic. Yet, they were not permitted to warn the dying king that he should burn rather than bury the books; nor did the demons have any power to prevent the plough from discovering the books, or of the pen of Varro from preserving a record of what happened when the plough unearthed the books. The demons have no power but what they are permitted to have; yet, by a just and inscrutable judgment of God, they are allowed to afflict those souls that have deserved affliction and even to deceive and dominate others.

As to the books themselves, we can judge how evil they were and how remote from the worship that is due to genuine divinity from the fact that the Senate preferred to burn the books which the frightened Pompilius had buried rather than to share his fears.

If, then, a person is determined to be irreligious in this temporal life, let him look for eternal life in the pagan rites; but, if he has no liking for the company of malignant demons, let him abandon his fear of that evil superstition by which they are adored and embrace the true religion in whose light the devils stand discovered and dismayed.

APPENDIX

A Letter of St. Augustine concerning The City of God

AMONG the half-dozen or so letters of St. Augustine which have been discovered since the appearance of the collection of 270 formed by the Maurists (Paris 1689), the most recently published deserves attention here as dealing primarily with *The City of God*. It was edited in 1939 by Dom Cyrille Lambot, O.S.B. (Maredsous), from two manuscripts.[1] In that of Reims, the older of the two (12th-13th cent.), the letter is described as a 'preface' to *The City of God* and is placed directly before it. In the authoritative judgment of Dom Lambot there is nothing in either the language or style of the letter to raise doubt as to its genuineness.

The Firmus to whom the letter is addressed is to be identified with an African priest of that name. This Firmus was one of the intimates of St. Augustine and was often the bearer of the bishop's letters to various correspondents, among them St. Jerome. In one instance he was to be charged with delivering a copy of the first thirteen books of *The City of God*, the work being then unfinished. The present letter announces to Firmus, who is at Carthage, the dispatch to him of the full twenty-two books of the completed work and advises him how to divide it into two or five parts if it should be found too

1 C. Lambot, 'Lettre inédite de S. Augustin relative au *De civitate Dei*,' *Revue Bénédictine* 51 (1939) 109-121. In a private communication Dom Lambot writes that he has found the letter in a third manuscript: Paris, Bibl. Nat. 2056, of the 12th century (apparently older than the manuscript of Reims).

bulky as a single volume. Firmus is asked to let the manuscript he is to receive be transcribed by any at Carthage who may not yet own a copy and to use it both for the instruction of the faithful and for any help it may give in releasing pagans from their superstitions.

A striking feature of the text Augustine sent to Firmus was that it had been read through in person by its author before dispatch.[2] We should bear in mind that the first three books of *The City of God* had been finished twelve years before the last eight. In reading the early books after completing the last, it is not likely that the author would have failed to correct a phrase here and there or add an occasional explanation.[3] If in fact Augustine retouched the work as he read, the text of *The City of God* sent to Firmus was in effect a new edition revised by the author. Modern editors of the work, confronting manuscripts which sometimes, for one and the same passage, furnish two divergent but quite acceptable readings, have been led to conjecture that in such cases both readings may have come from the pen of St. Augustine. Their finding gains support from the new letter, since this supplies a reasonable explanation of how such authentic doublets may have arisen.

The subjoined translation of the letter is based on Dom Lambot's edition. In a few cases his discussion of the letter provides interpretation of passages of doubtful meaning. These interpretations have been adopted here.

B. M. P.

2 A single word in the first sentence of the letter is the only evidence for this fact. Both manuscripts show it as 'relictos' ('abandoned'). Lambot corrects to 'relectos' ('reread'). A further ambiguity present in this opening sentence is discussed by Lambot 115 n. 4.

3 As Lambot shows (116 n. 2), corrections made by St. Augustine in his *On the Trinity* offer an interesting parallel to the present case; cf. Aug., *Epist.* 174 (tr. J. H. Baxter, *St. Augustine: Select Letters* [Loeb Classical Library 1930] 303ff.).

To Firmus,[4] My Distinguished and Deservedly Honored Lord, and My Cherished Son, Augustine Sends Greeting in the Lord

The books on the City of God which you most eagerly requested I have sent you as I promised, having also reread them myself. That this, with God's help, should be done has been urged by my son and your brother, Cyrpian,[5] who has furnished just that insistence I hoped would be forthcoming.

There are twenty-two sections.[6] To put all these into one whole would be cumbersome. If you wish that two volumes be made of them, they should be so apportioned that one volume contain ten books, the other twelve.[7] For, in those ten, the empty teachings of the pagans have been refuted, and, in the remainder, our own religion has been demonstrated and defended—though, to be sure, in the former books the latter subject has been dealt with when it was more suitable to do so, and in the latter, the former.

If, however, you should prefer that there be more than two volumes, you should make as many as five. The first of these

4 Lambot (113f.) collects the evidence identifying the African priest, Firmus. In *Epist.* 200, Augustine speaks of his intimate friendship with him. The closing paragraph of *Epist.* 82 (= Jerome, *Epist.* 116) is one of the texts which reveal Firmus as carrying letters between Augustine and Jerome. A certain Cyprian named there as performing similar service is probably the Cyprian mentioned early in the present letter; cf. Lambot 115 n. 3. From *Epist.* 184A, addressed to the monks Peter and Abraham, we learn that Firmus was to bring them a copy of the first thirteen books of *The City of God.*

5 See the preceding note.

6 Lat. 'quaterniones.' The word 'quaternio' normally signifies one of the 16-page quires or signatures commonly used in the physical composition of an ancient codex. Here it may well be synonymous with the literary division 'liber' ('book').

7 In the following sentences the expressions used by Augustine to describe the content of the several sections of *The City of God* are all but identical with others he uses elsewhere: *Retract.* 2.43; *De civ. Dei* 1.35f., 6 praef., 6.12, 10.32, 11.1; *Epist.* 184A. Cf. Lambot 112, 118f.

would contain the first five books, where argument has been advanced against those who contend that the worship, not indeed of gods, but of demons, is of profit for happiness in this present life. The second volume would contain the next five books, where [a stand has been taken against those] who think that, for the sake of the life which is to come after death, worship should be paid, through rites and sacrifices, whether to these divinities or to any plurality of gods whatever. The next three volumes ought to embrace four books each; for this part of our work has been so divided that four books set forth the origin of that City, a second four its progress—or, as we might choose to say, its development,[8]—the final four its appointed ends.

If the diligence you have shown for procuring these books will be matched by diligence in reading them, it is rather from your testing than from my promises that you will learn how far they will help you. As for those books belonging to this work on the City of God which our brothers there in Carthage do not yet have, I ask that you graciously and willingly acceed to their requests to have copies made. You will not grant this favor to many, but to one or two at most, and they themselves will grant it to others. Among your friends, some, within the body of Christian folk, may desire instruction; in the case of others, bound by some superstition, it may appear that this labor of ours can, through God's grace, be used to liberate them. How you are to share it with them you must yourself decide.

For my part I shall take care to make frequent inquiry, God willing, what progress you are making in my writings as you read them. Surely, you cannot fail to know how much a man of education is helped toward understanding the written word

8 The Latin words are 'procursus' and 'excursus.'

by repeated reading. No difficulty in understanding occurs (or, if any, very little) where there is facility in reading, and this gains in scope with successive repetitions. Constant application [brings to fruition] what [through inattention][9] would have remained immature.

In earlier letters, my distinguished and deservedly honored lord and my son Firmus, you have shown acquaintance with the books on the Academics that I composed when my conversion was yet fresh.[10] Please write in reply how you came to this knowledge.

The range of subject matter comprised in the twenty-two books of my composition is shown in the epitome that I send you.[11]

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9 Lambot found a lacuna here in the text provided by his two manuscripts; the words in brackets translate his suggested restoration.

10 The *Contra Academicos,* translated, under the title 'Answer to Skeptics,' by D. J. Kavanagh, O.S.A., in the first volume of the *Writings of Saint Augustine* as found in this series. In discussing this passage, Lambot (114) reminds us that Augustine's earliest writings were soon eclipsed by the greater works of his maturity. As we learn from Augustine's *Retractations* (1.2), his own copy of the *De beata vita* showed gaps he could not fill. All but one of his treatises on the liberal arts had vanished from his shelves, though Augustine understood that copies were owned by others (*Retract.* 1.6). In the *De Trinitate* (15.xii.21) Augustine discusses the utility of his books on the Academics to anyone 'who wishes to read them *and can do so*' ('qui potuerit et voluerit legere')—language which suggests that it was hard to find a copy. Read in the light of this passage of the *De Trinitate,* Augustine's request that Firmus write how he came to know the *Contra Academicos* gains point and, as Lambot remarks, is a guarantee of the authenticity of the letter.

11 Lambot (117) inclines to identify this epitome ('breviculus') with a set of still extant summaries used by Eugippius (first half of the sixth century) in compiling excerpts from the works of Augustine.

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